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❧ The Works of Congreve ❧

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THE WORKS OF CONGREVE

Comedies : Incognita : Poems

Edited by F. W. BATESON



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P R E F A C E

THIS selection has not been difficult to make. Congreve is like the little girl in the song: when he is good he is very, very good, and when he is not he is just plain horrid—as in “The Tears of Amaryllis for Amyntas”:

The prone creation, who so long had gazed,
Charmed with her cries and at her griefs amazed,
Began to roar and howl with horrid yell,
Dismal to hear and horrible to tell.

It is hoped that this edition is free from Congreve's more *horrid yells*.

A reliable text has been the first consideration. A full collation of the early editions and a discussion of their authority will be found in the “Bibliographical Notes” at the end of the book. The text of the plays and the poems follows the “Works of Mr. William Congreve” (1710) an edition described by Congreve himself as “the least faulty impression which has yet been printed.”* A considerable amount of trouble has been taken to avoid the

* The third edition of the “Works” (1710), though claiming to be “revised by the author,” is identical with the first except for the inclusion of two poems, “An Impossible Thing” and “The Peasant in Search of his Heifer.”

misprints which disfigure recent editions of Congreve, and it has been possible to correct a number of hitherto unsuspected errors in the text of the original "Works" by a comparison of the early quarto editions of the individual plays. The text of "Incognita" follows the first, and only authoritative, edition of 1692.

The spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, and (to a very limited extent) the stage directions have been silently modernised. In the case of Congreve the retention of the old forms is a piece of meaningless pedantry. A *literatim* reproduction of the "Works" of 1710 would not bring us nearer to Congreve's manuscripts, its only excuse, but to the conventions of Tonson's printers. A comparison of the manuscript of the poem "Of Improving the Present Time" with the early editions may be commended to the incredulous. It will be found that wherever Congreve diverged from contemporary convention, e.g. in his not infrequent capitalisation of adjectives, his printers corrected him.

In the division of the scenes in the plays the quartos have been followed instead of the "Works." In the quartos the English method was adopted of ending a scene only with the act or with a change of locality, whereas the "Works" follow the irritating French convention of terminating the scene with the entrance and exit of every character. A few additional directions, which are essential to the understanding of the text, have been supplied.

The notes are intended to be explanatory rather than illustrative, and the temptation to indicate parallelisms has been resisted. I have benefited greatly by the researches of my predecessors, and particularly by those of Mr. Montague Summers and Mr. Bonamy Dobrée.

F. W. B.

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INTRODUCTION

I

A BIOGRAPHER is tempted to regret in Congreve, the "unreproachful man," the ingratiating oddities of the minor Augustans. If only he had been a *gourmand* like Gay, or a nightbird like Rowe! If only, like the indomitable John Dennis, he could have been "as much surprised at a pun as at a bailliff!" But Congreve belonged in spirit to the older and the more sophisticated generation of the Restoration. A scrupulous sanity, tempered by reserve, was the quality that distinguished him, *volto sciolto e pensieri stretti*, and a gain in integrity was offset by a loss of vividness. It is not difficult nowadays to overlook him by the side of the solid flesh and blood of his contemporaries. Swift and Pope are still *actual*; Congreve is primarily only a name to which some literary masterpieces are attached. It is possible even to see a certain appropriateness in this. Congreve was not a Shakespeare, in spite of Dryden's unfortunate couplet:

Heaven, that but once was prodigal before,

To Shakespeare gave as much; she could not give him more.

But there is one thing that is Shakespearian in Congreve. His comedies stand on their own legs. "The Old Bachelor," "The Double-Dealer," "Love for Love," and "The Way of the World" are a world of their own, self-sufficient and self-explained, to which the idiosyncrasies of their creator are irrelevant. Our appreciation of the evasions of Angelica and the whims of Millamant is neither diminished nor increased by a knowledge of his relations with Mrs. Bracegirdle. Congreve's characters exist in their own right. They are not, like the characters of

Wycherley and Farquhar, a concealed autobiography. "The Plain-Dealer" of Wycherley, for example, seems to miss the universality of great satire because it contains an unexplained residuum of personal bitterness. It is possible that if we knew a little more about Wycherley "The Plain-Dealer" would be seen to justify itself. It might be a "confession" of the very first interest, and the scantiness of our information is a singular misfortune. In the case of Congreve, as in that of Shakespeare, there need be no such regrets. They are almost alone among English dramatists in the degree to which they have succeeded in *generalizing* their experience. It is their result that counts, not their originating impulse. The details of their careers might have an intrinsic interest if they could be recovered, but our ignorance of them does not detract from an understanding of their writings.

William Congreve was born at Bardsey, in Yorkshire, in the house of his maternal great-uncle, Sir John Lewis, in 1670. His father, a younger son of an old Staffordshire family, was an officer in the Army and the commander of the garrison at Youghal, near Cork. The greater part of Congreve's youth was therefore spent in Ireland. Like Swift, his senior by three years, and Berkeley, his junior by fifteen, he was educated at Kilkenny, the Eton of Ireland, where "he gave several instances of his genius for poetry, but the most peculiar one was a very pretty copy of verses which he made upon the Death of his Master's Magpie." In April, 1685, at the age of fifteen, he proceeded to Trinity College, Dublin, where he remained for nearly four years under the same tutor as Swift. The next step in his career was the Middle Temple, to which he was admitted in March, 1691. It is unlikely that Congreve was any more interested in the law than Witwoud in "The Way of the World," when that young hopeful was still one

of "the family of the Furnivalls," but we may infer that he was equally glad "to consent to that to come to London," and to the society of wit and fashion only to be found there. The pages of his first published work and only novel, "In-cognita," which was completed before the end of 1691, are an attractive testimony of the dazzled exhilaration that he experienced on first entering London society. In 1692 he had already become a recognized figure in the literary world, a *habitué* of Will's Coffee House, a contributor to the Miscellanies, the confidant of Dryden; and by the end of the year his first play was in rehearsal at Drury Lane. "The Old Bachelor" was acted in January, 1693, and was a triumphant success with both the critics and the public. Congreve awoke and found himself famous. "The Double-Dealer" followed in October, 1693; "Love for Love" in April, 1695; "The Mourning Bride," a tragedy, in 1697; and "The Way of the World" in March, 1700.

A poem of Swift's, "A Libel on Dr. Delany and Lord Carteret," throws a curious sidelight on Congreve in his earlier days:

Thus Congreve spent in writing plays,
And one poor office, half his days;
While Montague, who claimed the station
To be Maecenas to the nation,
For poets open table kept,
But ne'er considered where they slept;
Himself as rich as fifty Jews,
Was easy, though they wanted shoes,
And crazy Congreve scarce could spare
A shilling to discharge his chair.

The "one poor office" was a sinecure of £100 a year as a commissioner for licensing coaches. It was supplemented, one presumes, by an allowance. Congreve is not likely to have made more than a few hundred pounds by his plays.

The turning point in his career was in 1700—when he had exactly completed “half his days”—when he obtained a second sinecure, that of the customer of Poole, and the promise of the reversion of the secretaryship of Jamaica. It is possible that this increasing prosperity—with the indifferent success of “The Way of the World,” gout and bad sight, and a wretched controversy with Jeremy Collier, as contributory causes—may explain the cessation of Congreve’s dramatic activities. He lived for twenty-nine more years, “upon no other foot,” as he told the incredulous Voltaire, “than that of a gentleman who led a life of plainness and simplicity,” in continuous ill-health, but fêted by the nobility and adulated by the younger writers. An ambiguous romance with the younger Duchess of Marlborough refreshed his later years, and the tablet in Westminster Abbey was erected at her expense:

Mr. William Congreve died Jan. the 19th, 1728, aged fifty-six [*sic*], and was buried near this place; to whose most valuable memory this monument is set up by Henrietta, Duchess of Marlborough, as a mark how deeply she remembers the happiness and honour she enjoyed in the sincere friendship of so worthy and honest a man, whose virtue, candour, and wit gained him the love and esteem of the present age, and whose writings will be the admiration of the future.

The Duchess’s mother, the implacable Sarah, was brought to read the epitaph. “I know not,” she commented, “what ‘pleasure’ she might have had in his company, but I am sure it was no ‘honour’.” But the piety of Henrietta was not to be diverted by a malicious misquotation. She had a figure made, life-size, and exactly like him, which sat in Congreve’s clothes at her table. Its gouty feet were swathed in bandages, and a doctor diagnosed its daily condition. The eccentricity is as affecting

as it was peculiar. It is the only touch of the fantastic that enters into the biography of Congreve.

Congreve has left a charming confession of his faith in his verses "Of Improving the Present Time":

Come see thy friend, retired without regret,
Forgetting care, or striving to forget;
In easy contemplation soothing time
With morals much, and now and then with rhyme;
Not so robust in body as in mind,
And always undejected, though declined;
Not wondering at the world's new wicked ways,
Compared with those of our forefathers' days;
For virtue now is neither more or less,
And vice is only varied in the dress.
Believe it, men have ever been the same,
And Ovid's golden age is but a dream.

The bliss of solitude! It was an odd doctrine for an Augustan to preach, and the oddity is not diminished by the tone in which it was delivered. There is a note of over-emphasis—which Voltaire mistook for affectation—in the variations Congreve plays upon the theme in his poems and letters. It is impossible not to suspect that the epicureanism that he professed—"refining on his pleasures," like his own Fainall in "The Way of the World"—was a philosophy of retreat, a defensive confrontation of life, which had been acquired in opposition to the normal bent of his character. His natural tastes—books, music, the theatre, a pretty woman, a bottle of wine—were not those of a recluse. He was the wit, the charmer, the agreeable companion. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who had known everybody, once told Spence that she had never met anybody who had so much wit as Congreve. Was it then that there was something in him which he had to preserve, even against his own inclinations, from the rough-and-

tumble of the world? Did he have a presentiment that its prying and pressure would degrade or compromise his talent? The possibility is at least interesting. There was an enigmatic quality in Congreve, a certain sensitive discretion, that matches the non-committal grace of his comedies.

II

Dr. Johnson, in his downright way, has described the *dramatis personæ* of Congreve as "fictitious and artificial, with very little of nature, and not much of life." The criticism, though it is more accurate than that of some recent eulogists, requires a qualification. The characters in Congreve's comedies may not have much "nature," but they have a great deal of "life." Fondlewife and Lady Froth, Foresight and Lady Wishfort do not exactly belong to our workaday world. They are grotesque, unreal, fantastic; they have "very little of nature." But they *are* alive. They exude, some of them, a vitality that is almost disconcerting. Miss Prue and Master Ben may not be true to our life, but that they possess a life of their own is incontrovertible.

It is worth inquiring what the *kind* of life is with which Congreve's characters are endowed. The question is wider in its implications than may at first appear. It poses, ultimately, the problem of the nature of Congreve's genius. What is it that differentiates him not only from the other dramatists of the Restoration, but from Shakespeare and Jonson and Goldsmith and Shaw? What is his *secret*? The quality of the life in Congreve's plays is unmistakably different from that of any other English dramatist. It is different even, in spite of the occasional suggestions of

Smollett and Jane Austen,* from that of any of the novelists. To find a parallel to it we have to go outside English literature to the "Satyricon" of Petronius. Congreve may conceivably have learnt something from the creator of the terrific "humours" of Trimalchio. It is, at any rate, an interesting coincidence that William Burnaby, who was one of the earliest and cleverest of Congreve's imitators, was the first to translate Petronius into English. The translation was published in 1697, three years before "The Way of the World."

The most obvious fact about Congreve's characters is that they are without a background, without roots. It is impossible to discover more than a few bare and insignificant details about their antecedents. Who exactly, for example, was Lord Froth in "The Double-Dealer"? Was he a peer in his own right, or was he the son of a duke or a marquis? Was it a new creation, or did he belong to the old nobility? Was he a hanger-on of the court, or was he in politics? The questions are quite impossible to answer. It is difficult consequently to "place" Lord Froth; it would even seem that we are not intended to "place" him. His social *milieu*, his connections, his occupations—everything, in fact, that would establish his reality—have been left out. We can only take him as we find him—the loquacious embodiment of certain foibles. There is the same difficulty in the case of Mirabell, who is one of the most carefully studied of the characters. We do not know how old he is, whether he has been at the University, whether he is in Parliament, or whether he has a post. We do not know *anything* about him. It is to be presumed that we were not meant to.

The fact is that the *dramatis personæ* of Congreve only

* Ben is a kind of anticipation both of Lieutenant Bowling in "Roderick Random" and of Commodore Trunnion in "Peregrine Pickle."

exist in the moments of their appearance on the stage. They are imprisoned in their dialogue; they have no independent existence in the imagination. The characters of other dramatists seem to be able to escape from the plays in which they were born and to become typical figures as significant and as familiar as historical personages. There is, to the imagination, no difference of *kind* between the Cleopatra of Shakespeare and the Cleopatra of history. A proof of this is that the Cleopatra of the popular imagination is not the blonde of history, but the "gypsy" of "Antony and Cleopatra." The fictitious and the historical Cleopatra have coalesced into a single figure. It is characteristic of the greater dramatists that their creations have become public property in the same sense as the heroes of history and legend. The Caliban of Browning and Renan and the Hamlet of Laforgue have the same kind of imaginative reality at Perseus and Alexander. The characters of Congreve are of another order. And it is not a question of inferiority, but of a difference of method. Even Millamant, the most finished of all Congreve's creations, is only alive within the confines of "The Way of the World." She exists in the words she speaks; without them she evaporates. "It is a piece of genius," Meredith has remarked in his "Essay on Comedy," "to make a woman's manner of speech portray her. You feel sensible of her Millamant's presence in every line of her speaking." It is true. The short breathless sentences, with the repetitions and distinctions and the impersonal "one," are more vivid than any description:

Millamant. Aye, that's true. Oh, but then I had——
Mincing, what had I? Why was I so long?

Mincing. Oh, mem, your la'ship stayed to peruse a pecket of letters.

Millamant. Oh, aye, letters! I had letters. I am persecuted with letters. I hate letters. Nobody knows how to write letters, and yet one has 'em, one does not know why. They serve one to pin up one's hair.

She is all there, the affectations and caprices, the *hauteur*, the subtlety, the essential refinement. A whole character has been evoked just by the turn of a few sentences.

It may be desirable at this point to make a distinction. Congreve is often praised for his "style," but the word may be used with two meanings. There is *Millamant's* "style," and there is the "style" of Congreve which includes *Millamant's* among its possible variations. We may think of Congreve's "style" as the language of a nation, and *Millamant's* as the language of an individual. The individual speech is included in the national speech, but is not co-extensive with it. The national speech also embraces the speeches of millions of other individuals, each with their particular idiom and idiosyncrasy. It has been customary to praise Congreve's "style" and to overlook the "styles" of *Millamant*, *Lady Wishfort*, *Valentine* and the rest. Congreve's real achievement, what sets him apart from every other dramatist, including Shakespeare, is his differentiation of character, within the limits of a recognizably individual style, by the *manner* of the dialogue. The distinction is adumbrated by Horace Walpole in a neglected essay, "Thoughts on Comedy," which contains a singularly intelligent estimate of Congreve. "His gentlemen," Walpole points out, "ladies old and young, his footmen, nay, his coxcombs (for they are not fools but puppies*) have as much wit, and wit as much their own, as his men of most parts and best understandings. No character drops a sentence that would be proper in any other mouth. Not

* "Tell me," Pope had asked, "if Congreve's fools are fools indeed?"

only Lady Wishfort and Ben are characteristically marked, but Scandal, Mrs. Frail, and every fainter personage, are peculiarly distinct from each other. Sir Wilful Witwoud is unlike Sir Joseph Wittol, Witwoud is different from Tattle, Valentine from Mellefont, and Cynthia from Angelica."

Sheridan, who considered himself a second Congreve, is fundamentally his antithesis. In Sheridan's comedies a character is recognized by his *matter*: that is, by his behaviour, by the opinions he holds, by the consideration he receives. The *manner* is always Sheridan. Lydia Languish and Lady Sneerwell, Joseph Surface and Mr. Puff are stylistically indistinguishable. Their elaborate rhythms are his, not their own. One never feels that this is what this or that character must have said; one is satisfied if he might have said it. Congreve, on the other hand, when he is at his best, can give the impression that every sentence almost could not have been spoken by anybody else or in any other way. The idiosyncrasies of his creations seem to control and inform the manner of their speech.

We can discern the beginnings of Congreve's mastery of dialogue in "The Old Bachelor," imitative and immature (except for the brilliant farce of the Lætitia episodes) though the play is. The faculty is already evident, in a crude form, in Wittol's oaths, "gad's-daggers-belts-blades-and-scabbards," "what a dickens," "by the Lord Harry," and again in the scripturising of Fondlewife. It is to be seen in a subtler form in the grandiose eloquence of Heartwell and the "snip-snap" of Belinda. Belinda, it is true, does not quite come off. We alternately like and dislike her, and the uncertainty is a blemish. She has her charm and she has her affectations, but they exist side by side, they have not been fused together into a single idiosyncrasy. Belinda's chief interest is as a first sketch

for Millamant. We can catch a far-off hint of Millamant in the dialogue in St. James's Park:

Belinda. Oh, the most inhuman, barbarous hackney coach! I am jolted to a jelly. Am I not horribly toused?

[*Pulls out a pocket-glass.*]

Araminta. Your head's a little out of order.

Belinda. A little? Oh, frightful! What a furious phiz I have! Oh, most rueful! Ha, ha, ha! Oh, gad, I hope nobody will come this way, till I have put myself a little in repair. Ah, my dear, I have seen such unhewn creatures since. Ha, ha, ha! I can't for my soul help thinking that I look just like one of 'em. Good dear, pin this and I'll tell you. Very well. So. Thank you, my dear. But as I was telling you—— Pish, this is the untowardest lock. So as I was telling you—— How d'ye like me now? Hideous, ha? Frightful still? Or how?

But it is not exactly Millamant; or rather, it is Millamant before she had come to years of discretion.

"The Old Bachelor" also indicates the limitations of Congreve's dialogue. The direct expression of passion, except in a grotesque form, was beyond the range of his instrument. He was compelled to rely upon a theatrical simulation of passion and to borrow both his diction and his rhythms from the stage. The ejaculations of Silvia are practically blank verse:

Oh, how the name of rival fires my blood! I could curse 'em both. Eternal jealousy attend her love, and disappointment meet his! Oh, that I could revenge the torment he has caused! Methinks I feel the woman strong within me, and vengeance kindles in the room of love.

Of course Congreve was to do better than this. There are moments in "The Double-Dealer" when Lady Touchwood attains to a real eloquence, and "The Mourning Bride" has similar virtues. But they are the virtues of an

abstract style; they are not the specific virtues of dialogue. They are in the *lingua franca* of tragedy, and they lack the minute distinctions of personal emphasis which was Congreve's special contribution to comedy. The identity of the speaker, whether it is Lady Touchwood or Mrs. Marwood or Almeria, is a matter of secondary importance.

"The Double-Dealer" was acted in the same year as "The Old Bachelor" (1693). The fact is a striking indication of the rapidity of Congreve's artistic growth. "The Old Bachelor" had promise; "The Double-Dealer" was the almost immediate fulfilment of that promise. When it is remembered that the play was the work of a young man of twenty-three, the achievement seems little short of miraculous. "Among all the efforts," says Johnson, "of early genius which literary history records, I doubt whether anyone can be produced that more surpasses the common limits of nature than the plays of Congreve."* The drawing of the Plyants and the Froths displays the confident ease of maturity, and Congreve's youth is only to be detected in a single particular: an overworking of the *double entendre*. We hear a little too much of the "close dance" and the star-gazing of Brisk and Lady Froth. But it is necessary unfortunately, in appraising "The Double-Dealer," to discount the most important episode in the play. The Maskwell scenes may be plausibly excused as an experiment in *serious* melodrama, the kind of melodrama that Strindberg has perfected in "The Father"; but it must be admitted that it was an experiment that failed. The peculiar interest of "The Double-Dealer" is the development it exhibits in Congreve's mastery of the technique of the dialogue. Lord Froth is caught with especial skill:

* The precocity of Congreve may conceivably be connected with the early extinction of his talent. The case of Sheridan is somewhat similar.

Lord Froth. Ridiculous! Sir Paul, you're strangely mistaken. I find champagne is powerful. I assure you, Sir Paul, I laugh at nobody's jest but my own or a lady's. I assure you, Sir Paul.

Brisk. How, how, my Lord? What, affront my wit? Let me perish, do I never say anything worthy to be laughed at?

Lord Froth. Oh foy, don't misapprehend me. I don't say so, for I often smile at your conceptions. But there is nothing more unbecoming a man of quality than to laugh. 'Tis such a vulgar expression of the passion. Everybody can laugh. Then especially to laugh at the jest of an inferior person, or when anybody else of the same quality does not laugh with one! Ridiculous! To be pleased with what pleases the crowd! Now when I laugh I always laugh alone.

A formal and affected intonation is almost demanded by the spacing of the stresses and the pauses. We can watch the innocent pretender to solemnity that Lord Froth is gradually and complacently emerging into life. The rhythm actually creates the character.

"Love for Love," written a year later than "The Double-Dealer," is the most immediately likeable of Congreve's plays. The characterisation, especially that of Ben, Prue, Foresight and Sir Sampson, has an engaging, but obvious, effectiveness, which is sufficient to show that Congreve, if he had wished to, could easily have outdistanced Farquhar and Goldsmith in their own fields. It is almost a comedy of humours. The dialogue, however, is less careful than, and is without the technical interest of, "The Double-Dealer" and "The Way of the World." It is better fun perhaps, but it is less Congreve. The most remarkable of the characters is Valentine, in whom one can observe a magnificent development of the elaborate rhetoric of Heartwell in "The Old Bachelor":

Angelica. Do you know me, Valentine?

Valentine. Oh, very well.

Angelica. Who am I?

Valentine. You're a woman. One to whom Heaven gave beauty when it grafted roses on a briar. You are the reflection of Heaven in a pond, and he that leaps at you is sunk. You are all white, a sheet of lovely spotless paper, when you first are born, but you are to be scrawled and blotted by every goose's quill. I know you, for I loved a woman, and loved her so long that I found out a strange thing. I found out what a woman was good for.

Tattle. Aye? Prithee, what's that?

Valentine. Why, to keep a secret.

The richness and resonance of this prose, recalling the harmonies of Jeremy Taylor, is unique in Congreve. If the style may seem a little bizarre on the lips of a young rake of the town, it must be remembered not only that Valentine was pretending to be mad, but that the part was written for, and acted by, the great Betterton. The opportunity for some *bravura* effects must have seemed too good to miss.

Congreve's qualities culminate in "The Way of the World," all except one: his feeling for construction. The plot is needlessly involved, and the scenes have not got the "rush," the continuously recreated theatrical effectiveness of the Lætitia episodes in "The Old Bachelor" or Tattle's wooing of Prue in "Love for Love." And so like many of the world's greatest plays "The Way of the World" reads better than it acts. Only by reading it to oneself, and re-reading it, can one savour its perfection. The infallible rightness of the phrasing and the rhythm and the subtle variations of mood and *tempo* tend to be obscured in the bustle of a stage production. They must be lingered over and allowed to lie on the palate if they are to disclose their

full virtue. "It is," Hazlitt has written, "an essence almost too fine; and the sense of pleasure evaporates in an aspiration after something that seems too exquisite ever to have been realized. After inhaling the spirit of Congreve's wit, and tasting 'love's thrice reputed nectar' in his works, the head grows giddy in turning from the highest point of rapture to the ordinary business of life; and we can with difficulty recall the truant Fancy to those objects which we are fain to take up with here, *for better, for worse.*" The magic of "The Way of the World" is not, alas! the way of *our* world:

Beauty the lover's gift! Lord, what is a lover that it can give? Why, one makes lovers as fast as one pleases, and they live as long as one pleases, and they die as soon as one pleases. And then, if one pleases, one makes more.

"How it chimes, and cries tink in the close, divinely!" The quality of the beauty in writing such as this is not to be analysed, and it would be impertinent to praise it. The words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo.

III

"Incognita" is a fresh and, in its own mannered way, a delightfully written little thing. It should be better known. Dr. Johnson's characteristic grumble, "I would rather praise it than read it," may perhaps have deterred some readers. The objection has no force; Johnson had not even dipped into "Incognita," and it makes, as a matter of fact, the easiest reading. A more rational objection is that the scene is in Italy. If Aurelian and Hippolito had been the Englishman and the Irishman that they *really* were, if they had been students at Oxford and not at Siena, and if they had been on a holiday in London instead of Florence, the story would certainly have gained. The Italian setting

makes it a little artificial. The real fascination of "Incognita" is the picture it gives us of the young Congreve, fresh from Ireland and Staffordshire but still keeping his head, in the drawing-rooms of London. The exotic scenery is an irrelevance.

But "Incognita," with all its charm, does not add very much to our appreciation of Congreve as a writer. It belongs to the same side of him as the comedies. It is different with the poems; they reveal a range of emotion and style that the plays would not have prepared us to expect. It would not be exact to call Congreve a great poet, but he was a good poet, and he does not show up badly by the side of any of his contemporaries except Pope and Swift. There was a meditative weighty strain in him, unexpressed in the comedies, which comes out well in the lines to Cobham and again in the elegy on Lady Gethin:

After a painful life in study spent,
The learned themselves their ignorance lament;
And aged men, whose lives exceed the space
Which seems the bound prescribed to mortal race,
With hoary heads their short experience grieve,
As doomed to die before they've learned to live.

The most surprising of the poems is the ode "On Mrs. Arabella Hunt Singing," which contains a number of not wholly unsuccessful "conceits" on the "metaphysical" pattern:

See how they crowd, see how the little cherubs skip!
While others sit around her mouth and sip
Sweet Alleluias from her lip.

It might be Cowley; it might almost be Crashaw; but who would have suspected it of being Congreve? A more successful poem is the imitation, *à la* Dryden, of Horace's *Eheu fugaces*:

The rich, the great, the innocent and just
Must all be huddled to the grave
With the most vile and ignominious slave,
And undistinguished lie in dust.

There is an almost metallic resonance in these lines (the best in the poem) that is like a prophecy of Gray.

The best of the poems are a group of love poems which seem to have been written under the influence of Rochester. "The Decay," "Pious Selinda," "Doris" and "Amoret" are without Rochester's inevitability of phrasing, but his tone, half serious and half amused, is captured with singular success. Congreve had learnt the new philosophy of love. It was not cynicism but experimentalism, and the observer is never lost in the lover:

Tell me no more I am deceived,
That Chloe's false and common;
I always knew, at least believed,
She was a very woman.

It is no inconsiderable achievement to contemplate sex under the dry light of irony, and the lesson Congreve learned was to bear fruit in his comedies. The Augustans were generally anxious to disown Rochester. There is therefore a special interest in a letter of Congreve's, now in the British Museum, to his friend, Edward Porter. "If you see Mr. Custis to-night pray know of him if it be possible for me to have a picture of Lord Rochester which was Mrs. Barry's. I think it is a head. I think it is not as a painting any very great matter. However, I have a very particular reason why I would have it at any reasonable rate, at least the refusal of it." I would like to believe that this "very particular reason" of Congreve's was a consciousness of his debt to the older poet.

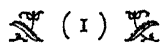
Congreve wrote a number of other pieces which make

pleasant enough reading. Some of the "Songs" are extremely well turned, and "An Impossible Thing" rivals Prior in graceful innuendo. And there is one great poem, a "Song" of eight lines:

False though she be to me and love,
I'll ne'er pursue revenge;
For still the charmer I approve,
Though I deplore the change.

In hours of bliss we oft have met,
They could not always last,
And though the present I regret,
I'm grateful for the past.

The firmness and concision of these lines and their sullen intimation of a latent passion seem to anticipate the epigrams of Landor. Congreve for once had also written "as others wrote on Sunium's height."



THE
OLD BACHELOR

P R O L O G U E

Spoken by Mrs. Bracegirdle*

*How this vile world is changed ! In former days
 Prologues were serious speeches before plays—
 Grave solemn things, as graces are to feasts,
 Where poets begged a blessing from their guests.
 But now no more like suppliants we come :
 A play makes war, and prologue is the drum ;
 Armed with keen satire and with pointed wit
 We threaten you who do for judges sit
 To save our plays—or else we'll damn your pit.
 But, for your comfort, it falls out to-day
 We've a young author and his first-born play,
 So standing only on his good behaviour
 He's very civil and entreats your favour.
 Not but the man has malice, would he show it,
 But on my conscience he's a bashful poet.
 You think that strange? No matter, he'll outgrow it.
 Well, I'm his advocate, by me he prays you
 (I don't know whether I shall speak to please you),
 He prays—O bless me! what shall I do now?
 Hang me if I know what he prays—or how!
 And 'twas the prettiest prologue as he wrote it!
 Well, the deuce take me if I han't forgot it.
 O Lord, for Heaven's sake excuse the play,
 Because, you know, if it be damned to-day,
 I shall be hanged for wanting what to say.
 For my sake then—but I'm in such confusion
 I cannot stay to hear your resolution. [Runs off.*

* Congreve's favourite actress (T. Davies). Ann Bracegirdle was the Ellen Terry *de ses jours*.

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

HEARTWELL, a surly old bachelor, pretending to slight women,
secretly in love with SILVIA.

BELLMOUR, in love with BELINDA.

VAINLOVE, capricious in his love; in love with ARAMINTA.

SHARPER.

SIR JOSEPH WITTOLL.

CAPTAIN BLUFFE.

FONDLEWIFE, a banker.

SETTER, a pimp.

SERVANT to FONDLEWIFE.

ARAMINTA, in love with VAINLOVE.

BELINDA, her cousin, an affected lady, in love with BELLMOUR.

LÆTITIA, wife to FONDLEWIFE.

SILVIA, VAINLOVE's forsaken mistress.

LUCY, her maid.

BETTY.

Boy and Footmen.

SCENE—London.

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THE OLD BACHELOR

ACT I

Scene I—*The Street.*

BELLMOUR and VAINLOVE meeting.

Bell. Vainlove! And abroad so early! Good morrow: I thought a contemplative lover could no more have parted with his bed in a morning than he could have slept in't.

Vain. Bellmour, good morrow. Why, truth on't is these early sallies are not usual to me. But business, as you see, sir. [*Showing letters.*] And business must be followed or be lost.

Bell. Business! And so must time, my friend, be close pursued or lost. Business is the rub* of life, perverts our aim, casts off the bias and leaves us wide and short of the intended mark.

Vain. Pleasure, I guess you mean.

Bell. Aye. What else has meaning?

Vain. Oh, the wise will tell you——

Bell. More than they believe—or understand.

Vain. How, how, Ned? A wise man say more than he understands?

Bell. Aye, aye. Wisdom's nothing but a pretending to know and believe more than we really do. You read of but one wise man and all that he knew was that he knew nothing. Come, come. Leave business to idlers and wisdom to fools; they have need of 'em. Wit be my faculty and pleasure my occupation, and let Father Time shake his glass. Let low and earthy souls grovel till they have

* A rub was the technical term in bowls for any obstacle in the path of the ball.

worked themselves six foot deep into a grave! Business is not my element; I roll in a higher orb and dwell——

Vain. In castles i'th' air of thy own building. That's thy element, Ned. Well, as high a flier as you are, I have a lure* may make you stoop. [*Flings a letter.*]

Bell. Aye, marry, sir. I have a hawk's eye at a woman's hand. There's more elegancy in the false spelling of this superscription—[*takes up the letter*]*—*than in all Cicero. Let me see. How now! [*Reads.*] “Dear perfidious Vainlove.”

Vain. Hold, hold. 'Slife that's the wrong——

Bell. Nay, let's see the name. “Silvia!” How can'st thou be ungrateful to that creature? She's extremely pretty and loves thee entirely. I have heard her breathe such raptures about thee——

Vain. Aye: or anybody that she's about.

Bell. No, faith, Frank: you wrong her. She has been just to you.

Vain. That's pleasant, by my troth, from thee who hast had her.

Bell. Never her affections. 'Tis true, by Heaven. She owned it to my face and, blushing like the virgin morn when it disclosed the cheat which that trusty bawd of nature, Night, had hid, confessed her soul was true to you, though I by treachery had stolen the bliss.

Vain. So was true as turtle—in imagination, Ned? Ha? Preach this doctrine to husbands and the married women will adore thee.

Bell. Why, faith, I think it will do well enough, if the husband be out of the way, for the wife to show her fondness and impatience of his absence by choosing a lover as like him as she can, and what is unlike she may help out with her own fancy.

* A decoy used to call the young hawks home.

Vain. But is it not an abuse to the lover to be made a blind of?

Bell. As you say, the abuse is to the lover, not the husband. For 'tis an argument of her great zeal towards him that she will enjoy him in effigy.

Vain. It must be a very superstitious country where such zeal passes for true devotion. I doubt it will be damned by all our Protestant husbands for flat idolatry. But if you can make Alderman Fondlewife of your persuasion, this letter will be needless.

Bell. What, the old banker with the handsome wife?

Vain. Aye.

Bell. Let me see. "Lætitia!" Oh, 'tis a delicious morsel. Dear Frank, thou art the truest friend in the world.

Vain. Aye, am I not? To be continually starting of hares for you to course. We were certainly cut out for one another, for my temper quits an amour just where thine takes it up. But read that. It is an appointment for me this evening when Fondlewife will be gone out of town to meet the master of a ship about the return of a venture which he's in danger of losing. Read, read.

Bell. Hum, hum. [*Reads.*] "Out of town this evening, and talks of sending for Mr. Spintext to keep me company; but I'll take care he shall not be at home." Good! Spintext? Oh, the fanatic* one-eyed parson!

Vain. Aye.

Bell. Hum, hum. [*Reads.*] "That your conversation will be much more agreeable, if you can counterfeit his habit to blind the servants." Very good! Then I must be disguised? With all my heart. It adds a gusto to an amour, gives it the greater resemblance of theft, and among us lewd mortals, the deeper the sin the sweeter. Frank, I'm amazed at thy good nature.

* A nickname given to the Puritans at the Restoration.

Vain. Faith, I hate love when 'tis forced upon a man, as I do wine. And this business is none of my seeking. I only happened to be once or twice where Lætitia was the handsomest woman in company, so consequently applied myself to her. And it seems she has taken me at my word. Had you been there, or anybody, 't had been the same.

Bell. I wish I may succeed as the same.

Vain. Never doubt it: for if the spirit of cuckoldom be once raised up in a woman, the devil can't lay it till she has done 't.

Bell. Prithee, what sort of fellow is Fondlewife?

Vain. A kind of mongrel zealot, sometimes very precise and peevish, but I have seen him pleasant enough in his way; much addicted to jealousy, but more to fondness; so that as he is often jealous without a cause, he's as often satisfied without reason.

Bell. A very even temper and fit for my purpose. I must get your man, Setter, to provide my disguise.

Vain. Aye, you may take him for good and all if you will, for you have made him fit for nobody else. Well——

Bell. You're going to visit in return of Silvia's letter? Poor rogue. Any hour of the day or night will serve her. But do you know nothing of a new rival there?

Vain. Yes, Heartwell. That surly, old, pretended woman-hater thinks her virtuous. That's one reason why I fail her. I would have her fret herself out of conceit with me, that she may entertain some thoughts of him. I know he visits her every day.

Bell. Yet rails on still, and thinks his love unknown to us. A little time will swell him so he must be forced to give it birth, and the discovery must needs be very pleasant from himself, to see what pains he will take, and how he will strain to be delivered of a secret when he has mis-carried of it already.

Vain. Well, good morrow. Let's dine together. I'll meet at the old place.

Bell. With all my heart: it lies convenient for us to pay our afternoon services to our mistresses. I find I am damnably in love. I'm so uneasy for not having seen Belinda yesterday.

Vain. But I saw my Araminta, yet am as impatient.

[*Exit.*

Bell. Why what a cormorant* in love am I! who not contented with the slavery of honourable love in one place and the pleasure of enjoying some half a score mistresses of my own acquiring must yet take Vainlove's business upon my hands, because it lay too heavy upon his; so am not only forced to lie with other men's wives for 'em, but must also undertake the harder task of obliging their mistresses. I must take up, or I shall never hold out; flesh and blood cannot bear it always.

Enter SHARPER.

Sharp. I'm sorry to see this, Ned. Once a man comes to his soliloquies I give him for gone.

Bell. Sharper, I'm glad to see thee.

Sharp. What, is Belinda cruel, that you are so thoughtful?

Bell. No, faith, not for that. But there's a business of consequence fallen out to-day that requires some consideration.

Sharp. Prithee, what mighty business of consequence canst thou have?

Bell. Why you must know, 'tis a piece of work toward the finishing of an alderman. It seems I must put the last hand to it, and dub him cuckold, that he may be of equal dignity with the rest of his brethren. So I must beg Belinda's pardon.

* Glutton.

Sharp. Faith, e'en give her over for good and all. You can have no hopes of getting her for a mistress, and she is too proud, too inconstant, too affected and too witty, and too handsome for a wife.

Bell. But she can't have too much money. There's twelve thousand pound, Tom. 'Tis true she is excessively foppish and affected, but in my conscience I believe the baggage loves me. For she never speaks well of me herself, nor suffers anybody else to rail at me. Then, as I told you, there's twelve thousand pound. Hum. Why, faith, upon second thoughts, she does not appear to be so very affected neither. Give her her due, I think the woman's a woman, and that's all. As such I'm sure I shall like her, for the devil take me if I don't love all the sex.

Sharp. And here comes one who swears as heartily he hates all the sex.

Enter HEARTWELL.

Bell. Who, Heartwell? Aye, but he knows better things. [*To HEARTWELL.*] How now, George, where hast thou been snarling odious truths, and entertaining company, like a physician, with discourse of their diseases and infirmities? What fine lady hast thou been putting out of conceit with herself, and persuading that the face she had been making all the morning was none of her own? For I know thou art as unmannerly and as unwelcome to a woman as a looking-glass after the small-pox.

Heart. I confess I have not been sneering fulsome lies and nauseous flattery, fawning upon a little tawdry whore, that will fawn upon me again, and entertain any puppy that comes, like a tumbler, with the same tricks over and over. For such I guess may have been your late employment.

Bell. Would thou had'st come a little sooner! Vainlove

would have wrought thy conversion, and been a champion for the cause.

Heart. What, has he been here? That's one of love's April-fools, is always upon some errand that's to no purpose, ever embarking in adventures, yet never comes to harbour.

Sharp. That's because he always sets out in foul weather, loves to buffet with the winds, meet the tide, and sail in the teeth of opposition.

Heart. What, has he not dropped anchor at Araminta?

Bell. Truth on 't is she fits his temper best, is a kind of floating island, sometimes seems in reach, then vanishes and keeps him busied in the search.

Sharp. She had need have a good share of sense to manage so capricious a lover.

Bell. Faith, I don't know. He's of a temper the most easy to himself in the world. He takes as much always of an amour as he cares for, and quits it when it grows stale or unpleasant.

Sharp. An argument of very little passion, very good understanding, and very ill nature.

Heart. And proves that Vainlove plays the fool with discretion.

Sharp. You, Bellmour, are bound in gratitude to stickle* for him. You with pleasure reap that fruit which he takes pains to sow; he does the drudgery in the mine, and you stamp your image on the gold.

Bell. He's of another opinion, and says I do the drudgery in the mine. Well, we have each our share of sport, and each that which he likes best. 'Tis his diversion to set,†'tis mine to cover the partridge.

Heart. And it should be mine to let 'em go again.

* Stand up for him.

† Lay a trap for.

Sharp. Not till you had mouthed a little, George. I think that's all thou art fit for now.

Heart. Good, Mr. Young-fellow, you're mistaken. As able as yourself, and as nimble too, though I mayn't have so much mercury in my limbs. 'Tis true, indeed, I don't force appetite, but wait the natural call of my lust, and think it time enough to be lewd, after I have had the temptation.

Bell. Time enough! Aye, too soon I should rather have expected from a person of your gravity.

Heart. Yet it is oftentimes too late with some of you young, termagant, flashy sinners. You have all the guilt of the intention, and none of the pleasure of the practice. 'Tis true you are so eager in pursuit of the temptation, that you save the devil the trouble of leading you into it. Nor is it out of discretion that you don't swallow that very hook yourselves have baited, but you are cloyed with the preparative, and what you mean for a whet turns the edge of your puny stomachs. Your love is like your courage, which you show for the first year or two upon all occasions, till in a little time, being disabled or disarmed, you abate of your vigour, and that daring blade which was so often drawn is bound to the peace for ever after.

Bell. Thou art an old fornicator of a singular good principle indeed, and art for encouraging youth, that they may be as wicked as thou art at thy years.

Heart. I am for having everybody be what they pretend to be—a whoremaster be a whoremaster, and not, like Vainlove, kiss a lap-dog with passion, when it would disgust him from the lady's own lips.

Bell. That only happens sometimes, where the dog has the sweeter breath, for the more cleanly conveyance. But, George, you must not quarrel with little gallantries of this nature. Women are often won by 'em. Who would refuse

to kiss a lap-dog, if it were preliminary to the lips of his lady?

Sharp. Or omit playing with her fan, and cooling her if she were hot, when it might entitle him to the office of warming her when she should be cold?

Bell. What is it to read a play in a rainy day—though you should be now and then interrupted in a witty scene, and she perhaps preserve her laughter, till the jest were over? Even that may be borne with, considering the reward in prospect.

Heart. I confess you that are women's asses bear greater burdens, are forced to undergo dressing, dancing, singing, sighing, whining, rhyming, flattering, lying, grinning, cringing, and the drudgery of loving to boot.

Bell. O brute, the drudgery of loving!

Heart. Aye, why to come to love through all these encumbrances is like coming to an estate overcharged with debts, which by the time you have paid yields no further profit than what the bare tillage and manuring of the land will produce at the expense of your own sweat.

Bell. Prithee, how dost thou love?

Sharp. He? He hates the sex.

Heart. So I hate physick too. Yet I may love to take it for my health.

Bell. Well, come off, George, if at any time you should be taken straying.

Sharp. He has need of such an excuse, considering the present state of his body.

Heart. How do you mean?

Sharp. Why, if whoring be purging (as you call it) then, I may say, marriage is entering into a course of physick.

Bell. How, George, does the wind blow there?

Heart. It will as soon blow north and by south. Marry, quotha! I hope in Heaven I have a greater portion of

grace, and I think I have baited too many of those traps, to be caught in one myself.

Bell. Who the devil would have thee? Unless it were an oyster-woman, to propagate young fry for Billingsgate. Thy talent will never recommend thee to anything of better quality.

Heart. My talent is chiefly that of speaking truth, which I don't expect should ever recommend me to people of quality. I thank Heaven I have very honestly purchased the hatred of all the great families in town.

Sharp. And you in return of spleen hate them. But could you hope to be received into the alliance of a noble family——

Heart. No, I hope I shall never merit that affliction. 'T'o be punished with a wife of birth! Be a stag of the first head and bear my horns aloft, like one of the supporters of my wife's coat! S'death, I would not be a cuckold to e'er an illustrious whore in England.

Bell. What, not to make your family, man, and provide for your children?

Sharp. For her children, you mean.

Heart. Aye, there you've nicked it. There's the devil upon devil. Oh, the pride and joy of heart 'twould be to me to have my son and heir resemble such a duke, to have a fleering* coxcomb scoff and cry, Mister, your son's mighty like his Grace, has just his smile and air of 's face. Then replies another, me thinks he has more of the marquess of such a place, about his nose and eyes, though he has my Lord What-d'ye-Calls mouth to a tittle. 'Then I, to put it off as unconcerned, come chuck the infant under the chin, force a smile and cry, aye, the boy takes after his mother's relations, when the devil and she knows 'tis a little compound of the whole body of nobility.

* Grinning.

Bell. and *Sharp.* Ha, ha, ha!

Bell. Well, but George, I have one question to ask you——

Heart. Pshaw, I have prattled away my time. I hope you are in no haste for an answer, for I shan't stay now.
[*Looking on his watch.*]

Bell. Nay, prithee, George——

Heart. No: besides my business, I see a fool coming this way. Adieu. [Exit.]

Bell. What does he mean? Oh, 'tis Sir Joseph Wittoll with his friend. But I see he has turned the corner and goes another way.

Sharp. What in the name of wonder is it?

Bell. Why, a fool.

Sharp. 'Tis a tawdry outside.

Bell. And a very beggarly lining. Yet he may be worth your acquaintance. A little of thy chemistry, Tom, may extract gold from that dirt.

Sharp. Say you so? Faith, I am as poor as a chemist, and would be as industrious. But what was he that followed him? Is not he a dragon that watches those golden pippins?

Bell. Hang him, no. He a dragon! If he be, 'tis a very peaceful one; I can assure his anger dormant, or should he seem to rouse, 'tis but well lashing him, and he will sleep like a top.

Sharp. Aye, is he of that kidney?

Bell. Yet is adored by that bigot, Sir Joseph Wittoll, as the image of valour. He calls him his back, and indeed they are never asunder. Yet last night, I know not by what mischance, the knight was alone, and had fallen into the hands of some night-walkers, who I suppose would have pillaged him. But I chanced to come by, and rescued him, though I believe he was heartily frightened, for as soon as

ever he was loose, he ran away without staying to see who had helped him.

Sharp. Is that bully of his in the Army?

Bell. No, but is a pretender, and wears the habit of a soldier, which nowadays as often cloaks cowardice, as a black gown does atheism. You must know he has been abroad; went purely to run away from a campaign; enriched himself with the plunder of a few oaths; and here vents 'em against the general, who, slighting men of merit and preferring only those of interest, has made him quit the service.

Sharp. Wherein no doubt he magnifies his own performance.

Bell. Speaks miracles, is the drum to his own praise—the only implement of a soldier he resembles, like that being full of blustering noise and emptiness——

Sharp. And like that, of no use but to be beaten.

Bell. Right: but then, the comparison breaks, for he will take a drubbing with as little noise as a pulpit cushion.

Sharp. His name, and I have done?

Bell. Why that, to pass it current too, he has gilded with a title. He is called Captain Bluffe.

Sharp. Well, I'll endeavour his acquaintance. You steer another course, are bound——

For love's island: I, for the golden coast.

May each succeed in what he wishes most.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT II

Scene I—*The Street.*

Enter SIR JOSEPH WITTOLL, SHARPER *following.*

Sharp. [*aside*]. Sure that's he, and alone.

Sir Jo. [*to himself*]. Um. Aye this, this is the very damned place. The inhuman cannibals, the bloody-minded

villains would have butchered me last night. No doubt they would have flayed me alive, have sold my skin, and devoured my members.

Sharp. How's this?

Sir Jo. If it hadn't been for a civil gentleman as came by and frightened 'em away. But, egad! I durst not stay to give him thanks.

Sharp. This must be Bellmour he means. Ha! I have a thought.

Sir Jo. Zooks, would the captain would come. The very remembrance makes me quake. Egad! I shall never be reconciled to this place heartily.

Sharp. 'Tis but trying, and being where I am at worst. Now, luck! [*Aloud.*] Cursed fortune! This must be the place, this damned unlucky place——

Sir Jo. [*aside*]. Egad! and so 'tis. Why here has been more mischief done I perceive.

Sharp. No, 'tis gone, 'tis lost. Ten thousand devils on that chance which drew me hither. Aye, here, just here, this spot to me is hell. Nothing to be found but the despair of what I've lost. [*Looking about as in search.*]

Sir Jo. Poor gentleman. By the Lord Harry I'll stay no longer, for I have found too——

Sharp. Ha! Who's that has found? What have you found? Restore it quickly, or by——

Sir Jo. Not I, sir, not I, as I've a soul to be saved. I have found nothing but what has been to my loss, as I may say, and as you were saying, sir.

Sharp. Oh, your servant, sir. You are safe then it seems. 'Tis an ill-wind that blows nobody good. Well, you may rejoice over my ill-fortune, since it paid the price of your ransom.

Sir Jo. I rejoice? Egad! not I, sir. I'm very sorry for your loss, with all my heart, blood and guts, sir, and if you

did but know me, you'd ne'er say I were so ill-natured.

Sharp. Know you? Why can you be so ungrateful to forget me?

Sir Jo. [aside]. O Lord, forget him! [*To SHARPER.*] No, no sir, I don't forget you—because I never saw your face before, egad! Ha, ha, ha!

Sharp. [angrily]. How?

Sir Jo. Stay, stay sir, let me recollect. [*Aside.*] He's a damned angry fellow. I believe I had better remember him, till I can get out of his sight. But out of sight out of mind, egad!

Sharp. Methought the service I did you last night, sir, in preserving you from those ruffians might have taken better root in your shallow memory.

Sir Jo. [aside]. Gads-daggers-belts-blades-and-scabbards, this is the very gentleman! How shall I make him a return suitable to the greatness of his merit. I had a pretty thing to that purpose, if he ha'n't frighted it out of my memory. [*To SHARPER.*] Hem! hem! Sir, I most submissively implore your pardon for my transgression of ingratitude and omission, having my entire dependence, sir, upon the superfluity of your goodness, which like an inundation will, I hope, totally immerge the recollection of my error, and leave me floating in your sight, upon the full-blown bladders of repentance, by the help of which I shall once more hope to swim into your favour. [*Borus.*]

Sharp. So-o. Oh, sir, I am easily pacified, the acknowledgment of a gentleman——

Sir Jo. Acknowledgment? Sir, I am all over acknowledgment, and will not stick to show it in the greatest extremity, by night, or by day, in sickness, or in health, winter, or summer, all seasons and occasions shall testify the reality and gratitude of your superabundant humble servant, Sir Joseph Wittoll, Knight. Hem, hem!

Sharp. Sir Joseph Wittoll.

Sir Jo. The same, sir, of Wittoll Hall in Comitatu Bucks.

Sharp. Is it possible? Then I am happy to have obliged the mirror of knighthood and pink of courtesy in the age. Let me embrace you.

Sir Jo. Oh Lord, sir!

Sharp. My loss I esteem as a trifle repaid with interest, since it has purchased me the friendship and acquaintance of the person in the world whose character I admire.

Sir Jo. You are only pleased to say so, sir. But pray, if I may be so bold, what is that loss you mention?

Sharp. Oh, term it no longer so, sir. In the scuffle last night, I only dropped a bill of a hundred pound, which I confess I came half despairing to recover. But thanks to my better fortune——

Sir Jo. You have found it, sir, then it seems? I profess I'm heartily glad——

Sharp. Sir, your humble servant. I don't question but you are—that you have so cheap an opportunity of expressing your gratitude and generosity. Since the paying so trivial a sum will wholly acquit you and doubly engage me.

Sir Jo. [*aside*]. What a dickens does he mean by a trivial sum? [*Aloud.*] But ha'n't you found it, sir?

Sharp. No otherwise I vow to Gad but in my hopes in you, sir.

Sir Jo. Humph.

Sharp. But that's sufficient. 'Twere injustice to doubt the honour of Sir Joseph Wittoll.

Sir Jo. Oh Lord, sir.

Sharp. You are above, I'm sure, a thought so low to suffer me to lose what was ventured in your service. Nay, 'twas in a manner—paid down for your deliverance. 'Twas so much lent you. And you scorn, I'll say that for you——

Sir Jo. Nay, I'll say that for myself, with your leave, sir. I do scorn a dirty thing. But egad! I'm a little out of pocket at present.

Sharp. Pshaw! you can't want a hundred pound. Your word is sufficient anywhere. 'Tis but borrowing so much dirt; you have large acres and can soon repay it. Money is but dirt, Sir Joseph, mere dirt.

Sir Jo. But I profess, 'tis a dirt I have washed my hands of at present; I have laid it all out upon my Back.

Sharp. Are you so extravagant in clothes, Sir Joseph?

Sir Jo. Ha, ha, ha! a very good jest I profess; ha, ha, ha! a very good jest, and I did not know that I had said it, and that's a better jest than t'other. 'Tis a sign you and I ha'n't been long acquainted; you have lost a good jest for want of knowing me. I only mean a friend of mine whom I call my Back; he sticks as close to me, and follows me through all dangers. He is indeed, back, breast and head-piece as it were to me. Egad! he's a brave fellow. Pah, I am quite another thing when I am with him. I don't fear the devil, bless us, almost if he be by. Ah, had he been with me last night——

Sharp. [*angrily*]. If he had, sir, what then? He could have done no more, nor perhaps have suffered so much. Had he a hundred pound to lose?

Sir Jo. Oh Lord, sir, by no means. (But I might have saved a hundred pound.) I meant innocently, as I hope to be saved, sir. (A damned hot fellow.) Only as I was saying I let him have all my ready money to redeem his great sword from limbo.* But, sir, I have a letter of credit to Alderman Fondlewife as far as two hundred pound, and this afternoon you shall see I am a person, such a one as you would wish to have met with.

* Pawn.

Sharp. [*aside*]. That you are, I'll be sworn. [*Aloud*]. Why, that's great and like yourself.

Enter CAPTAIN BLUFFE.

Sir Jo. Oh, here a comes. Aye, my Hector of Troy. Welcome my bully, my Back. Egad! my heart has gone a-pit-pat for thee.

Bluffe. How now, my young knight? Not for fear, I hope? He that knows me must be a stranger to fear.

Sir Jo. Nay, egad! I hate fear ever since I had like to have died of a fright. But——

Bluffe. But? Look you here, boy, here's your antidote, here's your Jesuits' powder* for a shaking fit. But who hast thou got with thee? Is he of mettle?

[*Laying his hand upon his sword.*]

Sir Jo. Aye, bully, a devilish smart fellow. A will fight like a cock.

Bluffe. Say you so? Then I honour him. But has he been abroad? For every cock will fight upon his own dunghill.

Sir Jo. I don't know, but I'll present you——

Bluffe. I'll recommend myself. Sir, I honour you. I understand you love fighting; I reverence a man that loves fighting. Sir, I kiss your hilts.

Sharp. Sir, your servant. But you are misinformed, for unless it be to serve my particular friend, as Sir Joseph here, my country, or my religion, or in some very justifiable cause, I'm not for it.

Bluffe. Oh Lord, I beg your pardon, sir. I find you are not of my palate; you can't relish a dish of fighting without sweet sauce.

Now I think——

Fighting for fighting's sake's sufficient cause;

Fighting to me's religion and the laws.

* Quinine was introduced into Europe by the Jesuits of Peru.

Sir Jo. Ah, well said, my hero. Was not that great, sir? By the Lord Harry, he says true. Fighting is meat, drink and cloth to him. But, Back, this gentleman is one of the best friends I have in the world and saved my life last night. You know, I told you.

Bluffe. Aye? Then I honour him again. Sir, may I crave your name?

Sharp. Aye, sir, my name's Sharper.

Sir Jo. Pray, Mr. Sharper, embrace my Back. Very well. By the Lord Harry, Mr. Sharper, he's as brave a fellow as Cannibal. Are not you, Bully-Back?

Sharp. Hannibal I believe you mean, Sir Joseph.

Bluffe. Undoubtedly he did, sir. Faith, Hannibal was a very pretty fellow. But, Sir Joseph, comparisons are odious. Hannibal was a very pretty fellow in those days, it must be granted. But alas! sir, were he alive now, he would be nothing, nothing in the earth.

Sharp. How, sir? I make a doubt if there be at this day a greater general breathing.

Bluffe. Oh, excuse me, sir. Have you served abroad, sir?

Sharp. Not I, really, sir.

Bluffe. Oh, I thought so. Why, then you can know nothing, sir. I am afraid you scarce know the history of the late war in Flanders with all its particulars.

Sharp. Not I, sir, no more than public letters or gazettes tell us.

Bluffe. Gazette! Why there again now. Why, sir, there are not three words of truth, the year round, put into the gazette. I'll tell you a strange thing now as to that. You must know, sir, I was resident in Flanders the last campaign,* had a small post there; but no matter for that. Perhaps, sir, there was scarce anything of moment done

* *The Old Bachelor* was written in the middle of William III's war with France.

but an humble servant of yours, that shall be nameless, was an eye-witness of. I won't say had the greatest share in it. Though I might say that too, since I name nobody, you know. Well, Mr. Sharper, would you think it? In all this time, as I hope for a truncheon,* this rascally gazette-writer never so much as once mentioned me. Not once by the wars. Took no more notice than as if Noll Bluffe had not been in the land of the living.

Sharp. Strange!

Sir Jo. Yet, by the Lord Harry, 'tis true, Mr. Sharper, for I went every day to coffee-houses to read the gazette myself.

Bluffe. Aye, aye, no matter. You see, Mr. Sharper, after all I am content to retire. Live a private person. Scipio and others have done it.

Sharp. [*aside*]. Impudent rogue.

Sir Jo. Aye, this damned modesty of yours. Egad! if he would put in for 't he might be made general himself yet.

Bluffe. Oh fie, no, Sir Joseph. You know I hate this.

Sir Jo. Let me but tell Mr. Sharper a little how you eat fire once out of the mouth of a cannon. Egad! he did. Those impenetrable whiskers of his have confronted flames——

Bluffe. Death, what do you mean, Sir Joseph?

Sir Jo. Look you now, I tell you he's so modest he'll own nothing.

Bluffe [*angrily*]. Pish, you have put me out. I have forgot what I was about. Pray hold your tongue and give me leave.

Sir Jo. I am dumb.

Bluffe. This sword I think I was telling you of, Mr. Sharper, this sword I'll maintain to be the best divine,

* Marshal's baton.

anatomist, lawyer or casuist in Europe; it shall decide a controversy or split a cause.

Sir Jo. Nay, now I must speak. It will split a hair, by the Lord Harry, I have seen it.

Bluffe. Zounds, sir, it's a lie, you have not seen it, nor shan't see it. Sir, I say you can't see. What d'ye say to that now?

Sir Jo. I am blind.

Bluffe. Death, had any other man interrupted me——

Sir Jo. Good Mr. Sharper, speak to him. I dare not look that way.

Sharp. Captain, Sir Joseph's penitent.

Bluffe. Oh, I am calm, sir, calm as a discharged cul-verin. But 'twas indiscreet, when you know what will provoke me. Nay, come, Sir Joseph, you know my heat's soon over.

Sir Jo. Well, I am a fool sometimes. But I'm sorry.

Bluffe. Enough.

Sir Jo. Come, we'll go take a glass to drown animosities. Mr. Sharper, will you partake?

Sharp. I wait on you, sir. Nay, pray Captain. You are Sir Joseph's Back. [Exeunt.]

Scene II—ARAMINTA'S apartment.

Enter ARAMINTA, BELINDA; BETTY waiting.

Belin. Ah! Nay, dear—prithee, good, dear sweet cousin, no more. Oh gad, I swear you'd make one sick to hear you.

Aram. Bless me! what have I said to move you thus?

Belin. Oh, you have raved, talked idly, and all in commendation of that filthy, awkward, two-legged creature, Man. You don't know what you've said; your fever has transported you.

Aram. If love be the fever which you mean, kind

Heaven avert the cure. Let me have oil to feed that flame and never let it be extinct, till I myself am ashes.

Belin. There was a whine! Oh gad, I hate your horrid fancy. This love is the devil, and sure to be in love is to be possessed. 'Tis in the head, the heart, the blood, the——all over. Oh gad, you are quite spoiled. I shall loathe the sight of mankind for your sake.

Aram. Fie, this is gross affectation. A little of Bellmour's company would change the scene.

Belin. Filthy fellow! I wonder, Cousin,——

Aram. I wonder, Cousin, you should imagine I don't perceive you love him.

Belin. Oh, I love your hideous fancy! Ha, ha, ha! love a man!

Aram. Love a man! Yes, you would not love a beast.

Belin. Of all beasts not an ass, which is so like your Vain-love. Lard, I have seen an ass look so chagrin. Ha, ha, ha! (you must pardon me I can't help laughing) that an absolute lover would have concluded the poor creature to have had darts, and flames, and altars, and all that in his breast. Araminta, come, I'll talk seriously to you now. Could you but see with my eyes the buffoonery of one scene of address—a lover, set out with all his equipage and appurtenances. Oh gad! sure you would. But you play the game, and consequently can't see the miscarriages obvious to every stander by.

Aram. Yes, yes, I can see something near it when you and Bellmour meet. You don't know that you dreamt of Bellmour last night and called him aloud in your sleep.

Belin. Pish, I can't help dreaming of the devil sometimes. Would you from thence infer I love him?

Aram. But that's not all. You caught me in your arms when you named him, and pressed me to your bosom.

Sure if I had not pinched you till you waked you had stifled me with kisses.

Belin. O barbarous aspersion!

Aram. No aspersion, Cousin, we are alone. Nay, I can tell you more.

Belin. I deny it all.

Aram. What, before you hear it?

Belin. My denial is premeditated like your malice. Lard, Cousin, you talk oddly. Whatever the matter is, o' my soul, I'm afraid you'll follow evil courses.

Aram. Ha, ha, ha! this is pleasant.

Belin. You may laugh, but——

Aram. Ha, ha, ha!

Belin. You think the malicious grin becomes you. The devil take Bellmour. Why do you tell me of him?

Aram. Oh, is it come out? Now you are angry, I am sure you love him. I tell nobody else, Cousin. I have not betrayed you yet.

Belin. Prithee, tell it all the world it's false.

Aram. Come then, kiss and friends.

Belin. Pish.

Aram. Prithee, don't be so peevish.

Belin. Prithee, don't be so impertinent. Betty!

Aram. Ha, ha, ha!

Betty. Did your ladyship call, madam?

Belin. Get my hoods and tippet, and bid the footman call a chair.

[Exit BETTY.]

Aram. I hope you are not going out in dudgeon, Cousin.

Enter FOOTMAN.

Foot. Madam, there are——

Belin. Is there a chair?

Foot. No, madam, there are Mr. Bellmour and Mr. Vainlove to wait upon your ladyship.

Aram. Are they below?

Foot. No, madam, they sent before, to know if you were at home.

Belin. The visit's to you, Cousin. I suppose I am at my liberty.

Aram. [*to FOOTMAN*]. Be ready to show 'em up.

[*Exit FOOTMAN.*]

Enter BETTY with hoods and looking-glass.

Aram. I can't tell, Cousin. I believe we are equally concerned. But if you continue your humour, it won't be very entertaining. [*Aside.*] I know she'd fain be persuaded to stay.

Belin. I shall oblige you in leaving you to the full and free enjoyment of that conversation you admire. Let me see. Hold the glass. Lard, I look wretchedly to-day!

Aram. Betty, why don't you help my cousin? [*Putting on her hoods.*]

Belin. Hold off your fists, and see that he gets a chair with a high roof, or a very low seat. Stay, come back here, you, Mrs. Fidget. You are so ready to go to the Footman. Here, take 'em all again. My mind's changed; I won't go.

[*Exit BETTY with the things.*]

Aram. [*aside*]. So, this I expected. [*Aloud.*] You won't oblige me then, Cousin, and let me have all the company to myself?

Belin. No: upon deliberation I have too much charity to trust you to yourself. The devil watches all opportunities, and in this favourable disposition of your mind, Heaven knows how far you may be tempted. I am tender of your reputation.

Aram. I am obliged to you. But who's malicious now, Belinda?

Belin. Not I. Witness my heart, I stay out of pure affection.

Aram. In my conscience I believe you.

Enter VAINLOVE, BELLMOUR, and FOOTMAN.

Bell. So, fortune be praised! To find you both within, ladies, is——

Aram. No miracle, I hope.

Bell. Not on your side, madam, I confess. But my tyrant there and I are two buckets that can never come together.

Belin. Nor are ever like. Yet we often meet and clash.

Bell. How never like? Marry, Hymen forbid. But this it is to run so extravagantly in debt. I have laid out such a world of love in your service, that you think you can never be able to pay me all, so shun me for the same reason that you would a dun.

Belin. Aye, on my conscience, and the most impertinent and troublesome of duns. A dun for money will be quiet when he sees his debtor has not wherewithal, but a dun for love is an eternal torment that never rests.

Bell. Till he has created love where there was none, and then gets it for his pains. For importunity in love, like importunity at Court, first creates its own interest, and then pursues it for the favour.

Aram. Favours that are got by impudence and importunity are like discoveries from the rack, when the afflicted person, for his ease, sometimes confesses secrets his heart knows nothing of.

Vain. I should rather think favours so gained to be due rewards to indefatigable devotion. For as Love is a deity he must be served by prayer.

Belin. Oh gad! would you would all pray to Love then, and let us alone.

Vain. You are the temples of Love, and 'tis through you our devotion must be conveyed.

Aram. Rather, poor silly idols of your own making, which upon the least displeasure you forsake, and set up new.

Every man now changes his mistress and his religion, as his humour varies or his interest.

Vain. Oh, madam——

Aram. Nay, come, I find we are growing serious, and then we are in great danger of being dull. If my music-master be not gone, I'll entertain you with a new song, which comes pretty near my own opinion of love and your sex. [*Calls.*] Who's there? [*To FOOTMAN.*] Is Mr. Gavot gone?

Foot. Only to the next door, madam; I'll call him.

[*Exit.*]

Bell. Why, you won't hear me with patience.

Aram. What's the matter, Cousin?

Bell. Nothing, madam, only——

Belin. Prithee, hold thy tongue. Lard, he has so pestered me with flames and stuff, I think I shan't endure the sight of a fire this twelvemonth.

Bell. Yet all can't melt that cruel frozen heart.

Belin. Oh gad! I hate your hideous fancy. You said that once before. If you must talk impertinently, for Heaven's sake let it be with variety; don't come always, like the devil, wrapped in flames. I'll not hear a sentence more that begins with an "I burn" or an "I beseech you madam."

Bell. But tell me how you would be adored; I am very tractable.

Belin. Then know, I would be adored in silence.

Bell. Humph, I thought so, that you might have all the talk to yourself. You had better let me speak, for if my thoughts fly to any pitch, I shall make villainous signs.

Belin. What will you get by that? To make such signs as I won't understand.

Bell. Aye, but if I'm tongue-tied, I must have all my actions free to—quicken your apprehension. And egad! let

me tell you, my most prevailing argument is expressed in dumb show.

Enter GAVOT.

Aram. Oh, I am glad we shall have a song to divert the discourse. [*To GAVOT.*] Pray oblige us with the last new song.

Gavot sings.

Thus to a ripe, consenting maid,
 Poor, old, repenting Delia said—
 Would you long preserve your lover?
 Would you still his goddess reign?
 Never let him all discover,
 Never let him much obtain.

Men will admire, adore and die,
 While wishing at your feet they lie;
 But admitting their embraces
 Wakes 'em from the golden dream;
 Nothing's new besides our faces,
 Every woman is the same.

Aram. So, how d'ye like the song, gentlemen?

Bell. Oh, very well performed; but I don't much admire the words.

Aram. I expected it. There's too much truth in 'em. If Mr. Gavot will walk with us in the garden, we'll have it once again. You may like it better at second hearing. You'll bring my cousin?

Bell. Faith, madam, I dare not speak to her, but I'll make signs.

[*Addresses BELINDA in dumb show.*]

Belin. Oh, fool, your dumb rhetoric is more ridiculous than your talking impertinence, as an ape is a much more troublesome animal than a parrot.

Aram. Aye, Cousin, and 'tis a sign the creatures mimic

nature well, for there are few men but do more silly things than they say.

Bell. Well, I find my apishness has paid the ransom for my speech, and set it at liberty. Though I confess I could be well enough pleased to drive on a love-bargain in that silent manner. 'Twould save a man a world of lying and swearing at the year's end. Besides, I have had a little experience that brings to mind—

When wit and reason, both have failed, to move;
Kind looks and actions (from success) do prove,
Even silence may be eloquent in love.

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

ACT III

Scene I—*The Street.*

Enter SILVIA and LUCY.

Silv. Will he not come then?

Lucy. Yes, yes: come, I warrant him, if you will go in and be ready to receive him.

Silv. Why did you not tell me? Whom mean you?

Lucy. Whom you should mean, Heartwell.

Silv. Senseless creature, I meant my Vainlove.

Lucy. You may as soon hope to recover your own maidenhead as his love. Therefore e'en set your heart at rest, and in the name of opportunity mind your own business. Strike Heartwell home before the bait's worn off the hook. Age will come. He nibbled fairly yesterday, and no doubt will be eager enough to-day to swallow the temptation.

Silv. Well, since there's no remedy. Yet tell me, for I would know, though to the anguish of my soul, how did he refuse? Tell me, how did he receive my letter? In anger or in scorn?

Lucy. Neither: but what was ten times worse, with damned, senseless indifference. By this light I could have spit in his face. Receive it! Why, he received it as I would one of your lovers that should come empty-handed, as a Court lord does his mercer's bill, or a begging dedication; he received it as if 't had been a letter from his wife.

Silv. What, did he not read it?

Lucy. Hummed it over, gave you his respects, and said he would take time to peruse it, but then he was in haste.

Silv. Respects, and peruse it! He's gone, and Araminta has bewitched him from me. Oh, how the name of rival fires my blood. I could curse 'em both; eternal jealousy attend her love, and disappointment meet his. Oh, that I could revenge the torment he has caused. Methinks I feel the woman strong within me, and vengeance kindles in the room of love.

Lucy. I have that in my head may make mischief.

Silv. How, dear Lucy?

Lucy. You know Araminta's dissembled coyness has won and keeps him hers——

Silv. Could we persuade him that she loves another——

Lucy. No, you're out. Could we persuade him that she dotes on him himself, contrive a kind letter as from her, 'twould disgust his nicety, and take away his stomach.

Silv. Impossible, 'twill never take.

Lucy. Trouble not your head. Let me alone. I will inform myself of what passed between 'em to-day, and about it straight. Hold, I'm mistaken, or that's Heartwell who stands talking at the corner. 'Tis he. Go get you in, ~~madam~~, receive him pleasantly, dress up your face in innocence and smiles, and dissemble the very want of dissimulation. You know what will take him.

Silv. 'Tis hard to counterfeit love, as it is to conceal it, but I'll do my weak endeavour, though I fear I have not art.

Lucy. Hang art, madam, and trust to nature for dissembling.

Man was by Nature woman's cully made;
We never are but by ourselves betrayed.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter HEARTWELL; VAINLOVE *and* BELLMOUR *following.*

Bell. Hist, hist, is not that Heartwell going to Silvia?

Vain. He's talking to himself, I think. Prithee, let's try if we can hear him.

Heart. Why whither in the devil's name am I a-going now? Hum, let me think. Is not this Silvia's house, the cave of that enchantress, and which consequently I ought to shun as I would infection? To enter here is to put on the envenomed shirt, to run into the embraces of a fever, and in some raving fit be led to plunge myself into that more consuming fire, a woman's arms. Ha! well recollected. I will recover my reason, and be gone.

Bell. Now, Venus forbid!

Vain. Hush——

Heart. Well, why do you not move? Feet, do your office. Not one inch. No, for egad, I'm caught. There stands my north, and thither my needle points. Now could I curse myself, yet cannot repent. Oh, thou delicious, damned, dear, destructive woman! S'death, how the young fellows will hoot me! I shall be the jest of the town. Nay, in two days I expect to be chronicled in ditty, and sung in woeful ballad to the tune of the superannuated Maidens' Comfort, or the Bachelors' Fall, and upon the third, I shall be hanged in effigy, pasted up for the exemplary ornament of necessary houses, and cobblers' stalls. Death, I can't think on 't. I'll run into the danger to lose the apprehension.

[*Goes in.*]

Bell. A very certain remedy; *probatum est.* Ha, ha,

ha! poor George, thou art i'th' right, thou hast sold thyself to laughter. The ill-natured town will find the jest just where thou hast lost it. Ha, ha! how a struggled, like an old lawyer between two fees.

Vain. Or a young wench between pleasure and reputation.

Bell. Or as you did to-day, when half afraid you snatched a kiss from Araminta.

Vain. She has made a quarrel on't.

Bell. Pah, women are only angry at such offences to have the pleasure of forgiving 'em.

Vain. And I love to have the pleasure of making my peace. I should not esteem a pardon if too easily won.

Bell. Thou dost not know what thou would'st be at, whether thou would'st have her angry or pleased. Could'st thou be content to marry Araminta?

Vain. Could you be content to go to Heaven?

Bell. Hum, not immediately, in my conscience, not heartily. I'd do a little more good in my generation first in order to deserve it.

Vain. Nor I to marry Araminta till I merit her.

Bell. But how the devil dost thou expect to get her if she never yield?

Vain. That's true: but I would——

Bell. Marry her without her consent? Thou'rt a riddle beyond woman.

Enter SETTER.

Bell. Trusty Setter, what tidings? How goes the project?

Setter. As all lewd projects do, sir, where the devil prevents our endeavours with success.

Bell. A good hearing, Setter.

Vain. Well, I'll leave you with your engineer. [*Exit.*

Bell. And hast thou provided necessaries?

Setter. All, all, sir: the large sanctified hat, and the little

precise band, with a swingeing long spiritual cloak to cover carnal knavery—not forgetting the black patch, which Tribulation Spintext wears, as I'm informed, upon one eye, as a penal mourning for the ogling offences of his youth; and some say with that eye he first discovered the frailty of his wife.

Bell. Well, in this fanatic father's habit will I confess Lætitia.

Setter. Rather prepare her for confession, sir, by helping her to sin.

Bell. Be at your master's lodging in the evening I shall use the robes. [Exit BELLMOUR.]

Setter. I shall, sir. I wonder to which of these two gentlemen I do most properly appertain? The one uses me as his attendant, the other, being the better acquainted with my parts, employs me as a pimp. Why that's much the more honourable employment by all means. I follow one as my master; tother follows me as his conductor.

Enter Lucy.

Lucy [aside]. There's the hang-dog* his man. I had a power over him in the reign of my mistress; but he is too true a *valet de chambre* not to affect his master's faults, and consequently is revolted from his allegiance.

Setter. Undoubtedly 'tis impossible to be a pimp and not a man of parts. That is, without being politic, diligent, secret, wary, and so forth. And to all this, valiant as Hercules. That is, passively valiant and actively obedient. Ah! Setter, what a treasure is here lost for want of being known.

Lucy [aside]. Here's some villainy afoot, he's so thoughtful. Maybe I may discover something in my mask. [Aloud.]
Worthy sir, a word with you. [Puts on her mask.]

* Scoundrel.

Setter. Why, if I were known, I might come to be a great man——

Lucy. Not to interrupt your meditation——

Setter. And I should not be the first that has procured his greatness by pimping.

Lucy. Now poverty and the pox light upon thee for a contemplative pimp.

Setter. Ha! what art, who thus maliciously hast awakened me from my dream of glory? Speak, thou vile disturber——

Lucy. Of thy most vile cogitations. Thou poor, conceited wretch, how wert thou valuing thyself upon thy master's employment? For he's the head pimp to Mr. Bellmour.

Setter. Good words, damsel, or I shall—— But how dost thou know my master or me?

Lucy. Yes, I know both master and man to be——

Setter. To be men perhaps? Nay, faith, like enough. I often march in the rear of my master, and enter the breaches which he has made.

Lucy. Aye, the breach of faith, which he has begun, thou traitor to thy lawful princess.

Setter. Why, how now? Prithee, who art? Lay by that worldly face and produce your natural vizor.

Lucy. No, sirrah, I'll keep it on to abuse thee and leave thee without hopes of revenge.

Setter. Oh! I begin to smook ye. Thou art some forsaken Abigail* we have dallied with heretofore, and art come to tickle thy imagination with remembrance of iniquity past.

Lucy. No, thou pitiful flatterer of thy master's imperfections; thou maukin†, made up of the shreds and parings of his superfluous fopperies.

Setter. Thou art thy mistress's foul self, composed of her sullied iniquities and clothing.

* Maid.

† Tatterdemalion.

Lucy. Hang thee, beggar's cur. Thy master is but a mumper* in love—lies canting† at the gate, but never dare presume to enter the house.

Setter. Thou art the wicket to thy mistress's gate, to be opened for all-comers. In fine, thou art the high-road to thy mistress.

Lucy. Beast, filthy toad. I can hold no longer. Look and tremble. [Unmasks.]

Setter. How, Mrs. Lucy?

Lucy. I wonder thou hast the impudence to look me in the face.

Setter. Adsbud, who's in fault, mistress mine? Who flung the first stone? Who undervalued my function? And who the devil could know you by instinct?

Lucy. You could know my office by instinct, and be hanged, which you have slandered most abominably. It vexes me not what you said of my person; but that my innocent calling should be exposed and scandalized—I cannot bear it. [Cries.]

Setter. Nay, faith, Lucy, I'm sorry. I'll own myself to blame, though we were both in fault as to our offices. Come, I'll make you any reparation.

Lucy. Swear.

Setter. I do swear to the utmost of my power.

Lucy. To be brief then: what is the reason your master did not appear to-day according to the summons I brought him?

Setter. To answer you as briefly: he has a cause to be tried in another court.

Lucy. Come, tell me in plain terms how forward he is with Araminta?

Setter. Too forward to be turned back, though he's a

* Beggar.

† Whining.

little in disgrace at present about a kiss which he forced. You and I can kiss, Lucy, without all that.

Lucy. Stand off. He's a precious jewel.

Setter. And therefore you'd have him to set in your lady's locket.

Lucy. Where is he now?

Setter. He'll be in the Piazza* presently.

Lucy. Remember to-day's behaviour. Let me see you with a penitent face.

Setter. What, no token of amity, Lucy? You and I don't use to part with dry lips.

Lucy. No, no, avaunt! I'll not be slobbered and kissed now. I'm not i'th' humour. *[Exit.]*

Setter. I'll not quit you so. I'll follow and put you into the humour. *[Exit after her.]*

Enter SIR JOSEPH WITTOLL and BLUFFE.

Bluffe. And so out of your unwonted generosity——

Sir Jo. And good nature, Back. I am good-natured and I can't help it.

Bluffe. You have given him a note upon Fondlewife for a hundred pound.

Sir Jo. Aye, aye, poor fellow. He ventured fair for 't.

Bluffe. You have disoblged me in it, for I have occasion for the money, and if you would look me in the face again and live, go, and force him to redeliver you the note. Go, and bring it me hither. I'll stay here for you.

Sir Jo. You may stay till the day of judgment then, by the Lord Harry. I know better things than to be run through the guts for a hundred pound. Why, I gave that hundred pound for being saved, and d'ye think, an there were no danger, I'll be so ungrateful to take it from the gentleman again?

* Inigo Jones's arcades on the north and east sides of Covent Garden.

Bluffe. Well, go to him from me. Tell him I say he must refund, or bilbo's* the word, and slaughter will ensue. If he refuse, tell him—but whisper that—tell him I'll pink his soul. But whisper that softly to him.

Sir Jo. So softly that he shall never hear on't, I warrant you. Why, what a devil's the matter, bully, are you mad? Or d'ye think I'm mad? Egad! for my part I don't love to be the messenger of ill news. 'Tis an ungrateful office, so tell him yourself.

Bluffe. By these hilts I believe he frightened you into this composition. I believe you gave it him out of fear, pure, paltry fear. Confess.

Sir Jo. No, no: hang 't I was not afraid neither, though I confess he did in a manner snap me up. Yet I can't say that it was altogether out of fear, but partly to prevent mischief, for he was a devilish choleric fellow. And if my choler had been up too, egad! there would have been mischief done. That's flat. And yet I believe if you had been by, I would as soon have let him a had a hundred of my teeth. Adsheart, if he should come just now when I'm angry, I'd tell him. Mum.

Enter BELLMOUR and SHARPER.

Bell. Thou'rt a lucky rogue. There's your benefactor. You ought to return him thanks now you have received the favour.

Sharp. Sir Joseph, your note was accepted, and the money paid at sight. I'm come to return my thanks——

Sir Jo. They won't be accepted so readily as the bill, sir.

Bell. I doubt the knight repents, Tom. He looks like the knight of the sorrowful face.

Sharp. This is a double generosity: do me a kindness and refuse my thanks. But I hope you are not offended that I offered 'em.

* Bilbao sword.

Sir Jo. Maybe I am, sir, maybe I am not, sir, maybe I am both, sir, what then? I hope I may be offended, without any offence to you, sir.

Sharp. Hey day! Captain, what's the matter? You can tell.

Bluffe. Mr. Sharper, the matter is plain. Sir Joseph has found out your trick, and does not care to be put upon, being a man of honour.

Sharp. Trick, sir?

Sir Jo. Aye, trick, sir, and won't be put upon, sir, being a man of honour, sir, and so, sir——

Sharp. Harkee, Sir Joseph. A word with ye in consideration of some favours lately received. I would not have you draw yourself into a premunire* by trusting to that sign of a man there, that pot-gun† charged with wind.

Sir Jo. Oh, Lord, oh, Lord, Captain. Come, justify yourself. I'll give him the lie if you'll stand to it.

Sharp. Nay, then I'll be beforehand with you. Take that, oaf.

[*Kicks him.*]

Sir Jo. Captain, will you see this? Won't you pink his soul?

Bluffe. Hush, 'tis not so convenient now. I shall find a time.

Sharp. What do you mutter about a time, rascal. You were the incendiary. There's to put you in mind of your time. A memorandum.

[*Kicks him.*]

Bluffe. Oh, this is your time, sir. You had best make use on't.

Sharp. Egad! and so I will. There's again for you.

[*Kicks him.*]

Bluffe. You are obliging, sir, but this is too public a place to thank you in. But in your ear, you are to be seen again.

* An act in contempt of the Royal prerogative (such as duelling).

† Pea-shooter.

Sharp. Aye, thou inimitable coward, and to be felt—as for example. [Kicks him.]

Bell. Ha, ha, ha! Prithee, come away. 'Tis scandalous to kick this puppy unless a man were cold, and had no other way to get himself a heat.

[Exeunt BELLMOUR and SHARPER.]

Bluffe. Very well, very fine. But 'tis no matter. Is not this fine, Sir Joseph?

Sir Jo. Indifferent, egad! in my opinion very indifferent. I'd rather go plain all my life than wear such finery.

Bluffe. Death and hell to be affronted thus! I'll die before I'll suffer it. [Draws]

Sir Jo. Oh Lord, his anger was not raised before. Nay, dear Captain, don't be in passion now he's gone. Put up, put up, dear Back. 'Tis your Sir Joseph begs. Come, let me kiss thee. So, so, put up, put up.

Bluffe. By Heaven, 'tis not to be put up.

Sir Jo. What, bully?

Bluffe. The affront.

Sir Jo. No egad! no more 'tis, for that's put up already. Thy sword, I mean.

Bluffe. Well, Sir Joseph, at your entreaty. But were not you, my friend, abused, and cuffed, and kicked?

[Putting up his sword.]

Sir Jo. Aye, aye, so were you too. No matter, 'tis past.

Bluffe. By the immortal thunder of great guns, 'tis false. He sucks not vital air who dares affirm it to this face.

[Looks big.]

Sir Jo. To that face I grant you, Captain. No, no, I grant you. Not to that face, by the Lord Harry. If you had put on your fighting face before, you had done his business. He durst as soon have kissed you as kicked you to your face. But a man can no more help what's done

behind his back than what's said. Come, we'll think no more of what's past.

Bluffe. I'll call a council of war within to consider of my revenge to come. [Exeunt.]

Scene II—SILVIA's Apartment.

Enter HEARTWELL and SILVIA.

As Amoret and Thyrsis lay
Melting the hours in gentle play,
Joining faces, mingling kisses
And exchanging harmless blisses,
He trembling cried, with eager haste—
Oh, let me feed as well as taste;
I die, if I'm not wholly blest.

[After the song a dance of antics.*]

Silv. Indeed, it is very fine. I could look upon 'em all day.

Heart. Well, has this prevailed for me, and will you look upon me?

Silv. If you could sing and dance so, I should love to look upon you too.

Heart. Why, 'twas I sung and danced; I gave music to the voice, and life to their measures. Look you here, Silvia [*pulling out a purse and chinking it*], here are songs and dances, poetry and music. Hark! how sweetly one guinea rhymes to another, and how they dance to the music of their own chink. This buys all the tother, and this thou shalt have; this, and all that I am worth for the purchase of thy love. Say, is it mine then, ha? Speak, siren. [*Aside.*] Oons, why do I look on her? Yet I must. [*Aloud.*] Speak, dear angel, devil, saint, witch. Do not rack me with suspense.

* i.e., in fancy dress.

Silv. Nay, don't stare at me so. You make me blush. I cannot look.

Heart. [*aside*]. Oh, manhood, where art thou! What am I come to? A woman's toy at these years? Death, a bearded baby† for a girl to dandle. Oh, dotage, dotage! That ever that noble passion, lust, should ebb to this degree. No reflux of vigorous blood, but milky love supplies the empty channels and prompts me to the softness of a child, a mere infant and would suck. [*Aloud.*] Can you love me, Silvia? Speak.

Silv. I dare not speak till I believe you, and indeed I'm afraid to believe you yet.

Heart. [*aside*]. Death, how her innocence torments and pleases me! [*Aloud.*] Lying, child, is indeed the art of love, and men are generally masters in it, but I'm so newly entered you cannot distrust me of any skill in the treacherous mystery. Now, by my soul, I cannot lie, though it were to serve a friend or gain a mistress.

Silv. Must you lie then, if you say you love me?

Heart. No, no, dear ignorance, thou beauteous changeling. I tell thee I do love thee, and tell it for a truth, a naked truth, which I'm ashamed to discover.

Silv. But love, they say, is a tender thing that will smoothe frowns, and make calm an angry face; will soften a rugged temper and make ill-humoured people good. You look ready to fright one, and talk as if your passion were not love, but anger.

Heart. 'Tis both, for I am angry with myself when I am pleased with you. And a pox upon me for loving thee so well. Yet I must on. 'Tis a bearded arrow, and will more easily be thrust forward than drawn back.

Silv. Indeed, if I were well assured you loved. But how can I be well assured?

* Doll.

Heart. Take the symptoms, and ask all the tyrants of thy sex if their fools are not known by this party-coloured livery. I am melancholy when thou art absent, look like an ass when thou art present, wake for thee when I should sleep, and even dream of thee when I am awake; sigh much, drink little, eat less, court solitude, am grown very entertaining to myself, and (as I am informed) very troublesome to everybody else. If this be not love, it is madness, and then it is pardonable. Nay, yet a more certain sign than all this, I give thee my money.

Silv. Aye, but that is no sign, for they say gentlemen will give money to any naughty woman to come to bed to them. Oh Gemini, I hope you don't mean so, for I won't be a whore.

Heart. [*aside*]. The more is the pity.

Silv. Nay, if you would marry me, you should not come to bed to me. You have such a beard, and would so prickle one. But do you intend to marry me?

Heart. [*aside*]. That a fool should ask such a malicious question! Death, I shall be drawn in before I know where I am. However, I find I am pretty sure of her consent, if I am put to it. [*Aloud.*] Marry you? No, no, I'll love you.

Silv. Nay, but if you love me, you must marry me. What, don't I know my father loved my mother, and was married to her?

Heart. Aye, aye, in old days people married where they loved, but that fashion is changed, child.

Silv. Never tell me that: I know it is not changed by myself, for I love you, and would marry you.

Heart. I'll have my beard shaved. It shan't hurt thee, and we'll go to bed——

Silv. No, no: I'm not such a fool neither but I can't keep myself honest. Here, I won't keep anything that's yours, I hate you now [*throws the purse*], and I'll never

see you again, 'cause you'd have me be naught. [*Going.*

Heart. [*aside*]. Damn her, let her go, and a good rid-dance. Yet so much tenderness and beauty and honesty together is a jewel. [*Aloud.*] Stay, Silvia. [*Aside.*] But then to marry. Why every man plays the fool once in his life. But to marry is playing the fool all one's life long.

Silv. What did you call me for?

Heart. I'll give thee all I have. And thou shalt live with me in everything so like my wife the world shall believe it. Nay, thou shalt think so thyself. Only let me not think so.

Silv. No, I'll die before I'll be your whore, as well as I love you.

Heart. [*aside*]. A woman, and ignorant, may be honest, when 'tis out of obstinacy and contradiction. But 'sdeath, it is but a maybe, and upon scurvy terms. [*Aloud.*] Well, farewell, then. [*Aside.*] If I can get out of her sight I may get the better of myself.

Silv. Well, good-bye.

[*Turns and weeps.*

Heart. Ha! Nay, come, we'll kiss at parting [*kisses her*]. By Heaven, her kiss is sweeter than liberty. I will marry thee. There thou has done 't. All my resolves melted in that kiss. One more.

Silv. But when?

Heart. I'm impatient till it be done. I will not give myself liberty to think, lest I should cool. I will about a licence straight. In the evening expect me. One kiss more to confirm me mad. So. [*Exit.*

Silv. Ha, ha, ha! an old fox trapped——

Enter Lucy.

Silv. Bless me! you frightened me. I thought he had been come again, and had heard me.

Lucy. Lord, madam, I met your lover in as much haste, as if he had been going for a midwife.

Silv. He's going for a parson, girl, the forerunner of a midwife, some nine months hence. Well, I find dissembling to our sex is as natural as swimming to a negro; we may depend upon our skill to save us at a plunge, though till then we never make the experiment. But how hast thou succeeded?

Lucy. As you would wish, since there is no reclaiming Vainlove. I have found out a pique she has taken at him, and have framed a letter that makes her sue for reconciliation first. I know that will do. Walk in and I'll show it you. Come, madam, you're like to have a happy time on't. Both your love and anger satisfied! All that can charm our sex conspire to please you.

That woman sure enjoys a blessed night
Whom love and vengeance both at once delight.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV

Scene I—*The Street.*

Enter BELLMOUR *in fanatic habit, and* SETTER.

Bell. 'Tis pretty near the hour [*looking on his watch*]. Well, and how, Setter, eh? Does my hypocrisy fit me, eh? Does it sit easy on me?

Set. Oh, most religiously well, sir.

Bell. I wonder why all our young fellows should glory in an opinion of atheism, when they may be so much more conveniently lewd under the coverlet of religion?

Set. S'bud, sir, away quickly. There's Fondlewife just turned the corner and 's coming this way.

Bell. Gads so, there he is; he must not see me. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter FONDLEWIFE *and* BARNABY.

Fond. I say I will tarry at home.

Bar. But, sir——

Fond. Good lack! I profess the spirit of contradiction hath possessed the lad. I say I will tarry at home, varlet.

Bar. I have done, sir, then farewell five hundred pound.

Fond. Ha! how's that? Stay, stay, did you leave word, say you, with his wife? With Comfort herself?

Bar. I did; and Comfort will send Tribulation hither as soon as ever he comes home. I could have brought young Mr. Prig to have kept my mistress company in the meantime, but you say——

Fond. How, how, say, varlet! I say, let him not come near my doors. I say he is a wanton young Levite* and pampereth himself up with dainties, that he may look lovely in the eyes of women. Sincerely I am afraid he hath already defiled the tabernacle of our sister Comfort, while her good husband is deluded by his godly appearance. I say that even lust doth sparkle in his eyes and glow upon his cheeks, and that I would as soon trust my wife with a Lord's high-fed chaplain.

Bar. Sir, the hour draws nigh, and nothing will be done there till you come.

Fond. And nothing can be done here till I go. So that I'll tarry, d'ye see?

Bar. And run the hazard to lose your affair, sir!

Fond. Good lack, good lack. I profess it is a very sufficient vexation for a man to have a handsome wife.

Bar. Never, sir, but when the man is an insufficient husband. 'Tis then, indeed, like the vanity of taking a fine house and yet be forced to let lodgings to help pay the rent.

Fond. I profess a very apt comparison, varlet. Go and bid my Cocky come out to me. I will give her some instructions. I will reason with her before I go.

[Exit BARNABY.]

* Private chaplain.

Fond. And in the meantime I will reason with myself. Tell me, Isaac, why art thee jealous? Why art thee distrustful of the wife of thy bosom? Because she is young and vigorous, and I am old and impotent. Then why did'st thee marry, Isaac? Because she was beautiful and tempting, and because I was obstinate and doting, so that my inclination was, and is still, greater than my power. And will not that which tempted thee also tempt others who will tempt her, Isaac? I fear it much. But does not thy wife love thee, nay, dote upon thee? Yes. Why then? Aye, but to say truth, she's fonder of me than she has reason to be; and in the way of trade we still suspect the smoothest dealers of the deepest designs. And that she has some designs deeper than thou can'st reach thou hast experimented, Isaac. But mum.

Enter LÆTITIA.

Læt. I hope my dearest jewel is not going to leave me. Are you, Nykin?

Fond. Wife, have you thoroughly considered how detestable, how heinous, and how crying a sin the sin of adultery is? Have you weighed it, I say? For it is a very weighty sin, and although it may lie heavy upon thee, yet thy husband must also bear his part, for thy iniquity will fall upon his head.

Læt. Bless me, what means my dear?

Fond. [*aside*]. I profess she has an alluring eye. I am doubtful whether I shall trust her even with Tribulation himself. [*Aloud.*] Speak, I say. Have you considered what it is to cuckold your husband?

Læt. [*aside*]. I'm amazed. Sure he has discovered nothing. [*Aloud.*] Who has wronged me to my dearest? I hope my jewel does not think that ever I had any such thing in my head, or ever will have.

Fond. No, no, I tell you I shall have it in my head——

Læt. [*aside*]. I know not what to think. But I'm resolved to find the meaning of it. [*Aloud.*] Unkind dear! Was it for this you sent to call me? Is it not affliction enough that you are to leave me, but you must study to increase it by unjust suspicions? [*Crying.*] Well, well, you know my fondness, and you love to tyrannise. Go on, cruel man, do. Triumph over my poor heart while it holds, which cannot be long with this usage of yours. But that's what you want. Well, you will have your ends soon. You will, you will, yes, it will break to oblige you. [*Sighs.*

Fond. [*aside*]. Verily I fear I have carried the jest too far. Nay, look you now if she does not weep. 'Tis the fondest fool. [*Aloud.*] Nay, Cocky, Cocky. Nay, dear Cocky, don't cry. I was but in jest. I was not ifeck.*

Læt. [*aside*]. Oh, then all's safe. I was terribly frightened. [*Aloud.*] My affliction is always your jest, barbarous man! Oh, that I should love to this degree! Yet——

Fond. Nay, Cocky.

Læt. No, no, you are weary of me, that's it, that's all. You would get another wife, another fond fool, to break her heart. Well, be as cruel as you can to me, I'll pray for you, and when I am dead with grief, may you have one that will love you as well as I have done. I shall be contented to lie at peace in my cold grave, since it will please you. [*Sighs.*

Fond. [*aside*]. Good lack, good lack, she would melt a heart of oak. I profess I can hold no longer. [*Aloud.*] Nay, dear Cocky, ifeck you'll break my heart, ifeck you will. See, you have made me weep, made poor Nykin weep. Nay, come kiss. Buss poor Nykin, and I won't leave thee. I'll lose all first.

* In faith, in earnest.

Læt. [*aside*]. How? Heaven forbid! 'That will be carrying the jest too far indeed.

Fond. Won't you kiss Nykin?

Læt. Go, naughty Nykin. You don't love me.

Fond. Kiss, kiss. I feck I do.

Læt. No you don't. [*She kisses him.*]

Fond. What, not love Cocky?

Læt. No—o. [*Sighs.*]

Fond. I profess I do love thee better than five hundred pound, and so thou shalt say, for I'll leave it to stay with thee.

Læt. No, you shan't neglect your business for me. No, indeed, you san't, Nykin. If you don't go, I'll think you been dealous of me still.

Fond. He, he, he! Wilt thou, poor fool? Then I will go. I won't be dealous. Poor Cocky, kiss Nykin, kiss Nykin, he, he, he! Here will be the good man anon to talk to Cocky and teach her how a wife ought to behave herself.

Læt. [*aside*]. I hope to have one that will show me how a husband ought to behave himself. [*Aloud.*] I shall be glad to learn to please my jewel. [*Kiss.*]

Fond. That's my good dear. Come, kiss Nykin once more, and then get you in. So. Get you in, get you in. Bye-bye.

Læt. Bye, Nykin.

Fond. Bye, Cocky.

Læt. Bye, Nykin. [*She goes in.*]

Fond. Bye, Cocky, bye-bye. [*Exit.*]

Enter VAINLOVE and SHARPER.

Sharp. How! Araminta lost?

Vain. To confirm what I have said, read this.

[*Gives a letter.*]

Sharp. Hum, hum. [*Reads.*] "And what then appeared a fault, upon reflection seems only an effect of a too power-

ful passion. I'm afraid I give too great a proof of my own at this time. I am in disorder for what I have written. But something, I know not what, forced me. I only beg a favourable censure* of this and your
Araminta."

Sharp. Lost! Pray Heaven thou hast not lost thy wits. Here, here, she's thy own, man, signed and sealed too. To her, man—a delicious melon, pure and consenting ripe, and only waits thy cutting up. She has been breeding love to thee all this while, and just now she is delivered of it.

Vain. 'Tis an untimely fruit, and she has miscarried of her love.

Sharp. Never leave this damned, ill-natured whimsy, Frank? Thou hast a sickly, peevish appetite, only chew love and cannot digest it.

Vain. Yes, when I feed myself; but I hate to be crammed. By Heaven! there's not a woman will give a man the pleasure of a chase. My sport is always baulked or cut short. I stumble over the game I would pursue. 'Tis dull and unnatural to have a hare run full in the hounds' mouth, and would distaste the keenest hunter. I would have overtaken, not have met my game.

Sharp. However, I hope you don't mean to forsake it. That will be but a kind of a mongrel cur's trick. Well, are you for the Mall?

Vain. No, she will be there this evening. Yes, I will go too, and she shall see her error in——

Sharp. In her choice, egad! But thou can'st not be so great a brute as to slight her.

Vain. I should disappoint her if I did not. By her management I should think she expects it.

All naturally fly what does pursue;

'Tis fit men should be coy, when women woo.

[*Exeunt.*

* Judgment.

Scene II—*A Room in FONDLEWIFE'S House.*

A SERVANT is discovered, introducing BELLMOUR in fanatic habit with a patch upon one eye and a book in his hand.

Serv. Here's a chair, sir, if you please to repose yourself. My mistress is coming, sir. [*Exit SERVANT.*]

Bell. Secure in my disguise I have outfaced suspicion and even dared discovery. This cloak my sanctity, and trusty Scarron's novels my Prayer Book. Methinks I am the very picture of Montufar in the Hypocrites.* Oh, she comes!

Enter LÆTITIA.

Bell. "So breaks Aurora through the veil of night,
Thus fly the clouds, divided by her light,
And every eye receives a new-born sight."

[*Throwing off his cloak, patch, etc.*]

Læt. "Thus strewed with blushes, like——" [*Discovering him, starts.*] Ah! Heaven defend me! Who's this?

Bell. Your lover.

Læt. [*aside*]. Vainlove's friend! I know his face, and he has betrayed me to him.

Bell. You are surprised. Did you not expect a lover, madam? Those eyes shone kindly on my first appearance, though now they are o'ercast.

Læt. I may well be surprised at your person and impudence; they are both new to me. You are not what your first appearance promised. The piety of your habit was welcome, but not the hypocrisy.

Bell. Rather the hypocrisy was welcome, but not the hypocrite.

Læt. Who are you, sir? You have mistaken the house, sure.

* In *Le Roman Comique*.

Bell. I have directions in my pocket, which agree with everything but your unkindness. [*Pull out the letter.*

Læt. [*aside*]. My letter! Base Vainlove! Then 'tis too late to dissemble. [*Aloud.*] 'Tis plain then you have mistaken the person. [*Going.*

Bell. [*aside*]. If we part so I'm mistaken. [*Aloud.*] Hold, hold, madam. I confess I have run into an error. I beg your pardon a thousand times. What an eternal blockhead am I! Can you forgive me the disorder I have put you into? But it is a mistake which anybody might have made.

Læt. [*aside*]. What can this mean? 'Tis impossible he should be mistaken after all this. A handsome fellow, if he had not surprised me. Methinks, now I look on him again, I would not have him mistaken. [*Aloud.*] We are all liable to mistakes, sir. If you own it to be so, there needs no farther apology.

Bell. Nay, faith, madam, 'tis a pleasant one, and worth your hearing. Expecting a friend last night at his lodgings till 'twas late, my intimacy with him gave me the freedom of his bed. He not coming home all night, a letter was delivered to me by a servant in the morning. Upon the perusal I found the contents so charming, that I could think of nothing all day but putting 'em in practice. Till just now, the first time I ever looked upon the superscription, I am the most surprised in the world to find it directed to Mr. Vainlove. Gad, madam, I ask you a million of pardons and will make you any satisfaction.

Læt. [*aside*]. I am discovered. And either Vainlove is not guilty, or he has handsomely excused him.

Bell. You appear concerned, madam.

Læt. I hope you are a gentleman; and since you are privy to a weak woman's failing, won't turn it to the prejudice of her reputation. You look as if you had more honour——

Bell. And more love; or my face is a false witness and deserves to be pilloried. No, by Heaven, I swear——

Læt. Nay, don't swear if you'd have me believe you; but promise——

Bell. Well, I promise. A promise is so cold. Give me leave to swear, by those eyes, those killing eyes, by those healing lips. Oh, press the soft charm close to mine, and seal 'em up for ever!

Læt. Upon that condition. *[He kisses her.]*

Bell. Eternity was in that moment. One more, upon any condition.

Læt. Nay, now. *[Aside.]* I never saw anything so agreeably impudent. *[Aloud.]* Won't you censure me for this now? But 'tis to buy your silence. *[Kiss.]* Oh, but what am I doing?

Bell. Doing? No tongue can express it. Not thy own, nor anything but thy lips. I am faint with the excess of bliss. Oh, for love-sake, lead me any whither where I may lie down, quickly, for I'm afraid I shall have a fit.

Læt. Bless me! What fit?

Bell. Oh, a convulsion. I feel the symptoms.

Læt. Does it hold you long? I'm afraid to carry you into my chamber.

Bell. Oh, no. Let me lie down upon the bed. The fit will be soon over. *[Exeunt.]*

Scene III—*St. James's Park.*

ARAMINTA and BELINDA meeting.

Belin. Lard, my dear: I am glad I have met you. I have been at the Exchange* since, and am so tired.

Aram. Why, what's the matter?

* A bazaar on the south side of the Strand.

Belin. Oh, the most inhumane, barbarous hackney-coach! I am jolted to a jelly. Am I not horribly toused?*

[*Pulls out a pocket-glass.*]

Aram. Your head's a little out of order.

Belin. A little? Oh, frightful! What a furious phiz I have! Oh, most rueful. Ha, ha, ha! Oh gad! I hope nobody will come this way till I have put myself a little in repair. Ah! my dear, I have seen such unhewn creatures since. Ha, ha, ha! I can't for my soul help thinking that I look just like one of 'em. Good dear, pin this, and I'll tell you. Very well. So, thank you, my dear. But as I was telling you. Pish, this is the untowardest lock. So, as I was telling you. How do you like me now? Hideous, ha? Frightful still, or how?

Aram. No, no: you're very well as can be.

Belin. And so. But where did I leave off, my dear? I was telling you——

Aram. You were about to tell me something, child, but you left off before you began.

Belin. Oh, a most comical sight! A country squire, with the equipage of a wife and two daughters, came to Mrs. Snipwel's shop while I was there. But, oh gad! two such unlicked cubs!

Aram. I warrant plump, cherry-cheeked country girls.

Belin. Aye, o' my conscience, fat as barn-door fowl; but so bedecked you would have taken 'em for Friezland hens, with their feathers growing the wrong way. Oh, such outlandish creatures! Such Tramontanæ and foreigners to the fashion, or anything in practice! I had not patience to behold. I undertook the modelling of one of their fronts, the more modern structure.

Aram. Bless me, Cousin! why would you affront any-

* Dishevelled.

body so? They might be gentlewomen of a very good family——

Belin. Of a very ancient one, I dare swear, by their dress. Affront! Pshaw! how you're mistaken. The poor creature, I warrant, was as full of curtsies as if I had been her godmother. The truth on't is I did endeavour to make her look like a Christian, and she was sensible of it, for she thanked me, and gave me two apples, piping hot, out of her under-petticoat pocket. Ha, ha, ha! And tother did so stare and gape. I fancied her like the front of her father's hall. Her eyes were the two jut-windows* and her mouth the great door, most hospitably kept open, for the entertainment of travelling flies.

Aram. So—then you have been diverted. What did they buy?

Belin. Why, the father bought a powder-horn, and an almanac, and a comb-case; the mother, a great fruz-tower,† and a fat amber-necklace; the daughters only tore two pair of kid-leather gloves with trying 'em on. Oh gad! here comes the fool that dined at my Lady Freelove's tother day.

Enter SIR JOSEPH and BLUFFE.

Aram. Maybe he may not know us again.

Belin. We'll put on our masks to secure his ignorance.

[They put on their masks.]

Sir Jo. Nay, gad! I'll pick up. I'm resolved to make a night on't. I'll go to Alderman Fondlewife by and by and get fifty pieces more from him. Adslidikins, bully, we'll wallow in wine and women. Why, this same Madeira wine has made me as light as a grasshopper. Hist, hist, bully! Does thou see those tearers? *[Sings.]* "Look you

* Bow-windows.

† A frizzed front of false hair.

what here is, Look you what here is. Toll-loll-dera-toll-loll——” Egad! tother glass of Madeira, and I durst have attacked ’em in my own proper person without your help.

Bluffe. Come on then, knight. But do you know what to say to ’em?

Sir Jo. Say? Pooh, pox, I’ve enough to say, never fear it—that is, if I can but think on’t. Truth is I have but a treacherous memory.

Belin. Oh, frightful! Cousin, what shall we do? These things come towards us.

Aram. No matter. I see Vainlove coming this way and, to confess my failing, I am willing to give him an opportunity of making his peace with me, and to rid me of these coxcombs, when I seem oppressed with ’em, will be a fair one.

Bluffe. Ladies, by these hilts you are well met.

Aram. We are afraid not.

Bluffe [to BELINDA]. What says my pretty little knapsack carrier?

Belin. Oh, monstrous filthy fellow! Good slovenly Captain Huffe, Bluffe (what is your hideous name?), be gone. You stink of brandy and tobacco, most soldier-like. Foh! [Spits.]

Sir Jo. [aside]. Now am I slap-dash down in the mouth and have not one word to say.

Aram. [aside]. I hope my fool has not confidence enough to be troublesome.

Sir Jo. Hem! Pray, madam, which way’s the wind?

Aram. A pithy question. Have you sent your wits for a venture, sir, that you inquire?

Sir Jo. [aside]. Nay, now I’m in I can prattle like a magpie.

Enter SHARPER and VAINLOVE at some distance.

Belin. Dear Araminta, I'm tired.

Aram. 'Tis but pulling off our masks and obliging Vainlove to know us. I'll be rid of my fool by fair means. Well, Sir Joseph, you shall see my face, but be gone immediately. I see one that will be jealous to find me in discourse with you. Be discreet. No reply, but away.

[*Unmasks.*]

Sir Jo. [*aside*]. The great fortune that dined at my Lady Freelove's! Sir Joseph, thou art a made man. Egad! I'm in love up to the ears. But I'll be discreet and hushed.

Bluffe. Nay, by the world, I'll see your face.

Belin. You shall.

[*Unmasks.*]

Sharp. Ladies, your humble servant. We were afraid you would not have given us leave to know you.

Aram. We thought to have been private. But we find fools have the same advantage over a face in a mask that a coward has, while the sword is in the scabbard. So were forced to draw in our own defence.

Bluffe [*to* SIR JOSEPH]. My blood rises at that fellow. I can't stay where he is, and I must not draw in the park.*

Sir Jo. I wish I durst stay to let her know my lodging.

[*Exeunt* SIR JOSEPH and BLUFFE.]

Sharp. There is in true beauty, as in courage, somewhat which narrow souls cannot dare to admire. And see; the owls are fled as at the break of day.

Belin. Very courtly. I believe Mr. Vainlove has not rubbed his eyes since break of day neither; he looks as if he durst not approach. Nay, come, Cousin, be friends with him. I swear he looks so very simply, ha, ha, ha! Well, a lover in the state of separation from his mistress is like a body without a soul. Mr. Vainlove, shall I be bound for your good behaviour for the future?

Vain. [*aside*]. Now must I pretend ignorance equal to

* St. James's Park was part of the Royal precincts.

hers of what she knows as well as I. [*Aloud.*] Men are apt to offend, 'tis true, where they find most goodness to forgive. But, madam, I hope I shall prove of a temper not to abuse mercy by committing new offences.

Aram. [*aside*]. So cold!

Belin. I have broken the ice for you, Mr. Vainlove, and so I leave you. Come, Mr. Sharper, you and I will take a turn, and laugh at the vulgar—both the great vulgar and the small.* Oh, gad! I have a great passion for Cowley. Don't you admire him?

Sharp. Oh, madam! He was our English Horace.

Belin. Ah, so fine! So extremely fine! So everything in the world that I like. Oh Lord! walk this way. I see a couple; I'll give you their history.

[*Exeunt* BELINDA and SHARPER.]

Vain. I find, madam, the formality of the Law must be observed, though the penalty of it be dispensed with, and an offender must plead to his arraignment, though he has his pardon in his pocket.

Aram. I'm amazed! This insolence exceeds tother. Whoever has encouraged you to this assurance, presuming upon the easiness of my temper, has much deceived you, and so you shall find.

Vain. [*aside*]. Hey-day! Which way now? Here's fine doubling.

Aram. Base man! Was it not enough to affront me with your saucy passion?

Vain. You have given that passion a much kinder epithet than saucy in another place.

Aram. Another place! Some villainous design to blast my honour. But though thou had'st all the treachery and malice of thy sex, thou can'st not lay a blemish on my fame. No, I have nor erred in one favourable thought of man-

* A quotation from Cowley's translation of Horace, book III, Ode I.

kind. How time might have deceived me in you, I know not; my opinion was but young, and your early baseness has prevented its growing to a wrong belief. Unworthy and ungrateful! Begone, and never see me more.

Vain. Did I dream? Or do I dream? Shall I believe my eyes or ears? The vision is here still. Your passion, madam, will admit of no further reasoning. But here's a silent witness of your acquaintance.

[Takes out the letter and offers it. She snatches it, and throws it away.]

Aram. There's poison in everything you touch. Blisters will follow——

Vain. That tongue, which denies what the hands have done.

Aram. Still mystically senseless, and impudent. I find I must leave the place.

Vain. No, madam, I'm gone. *[Aside.]* She knows her name's to it, which she will be unwilling to expose to the censure of the first finder. *[Exit.]*

Aram. Woman's obstinacy made me blind to what woman's curiosity now tempts me to see.

[Takes up the letter and exit.]

Enter BELINDA and SHARPER.

Belin. Nay, we have spared nobody, I swear. Mr. Sharper, you're a pure man. Where did you get this excellent talent of railing?

Sharp. Faith, madam, the talent was born with me. I confess I have taken care to improve it, to qualify me for the society of ladies.

Belin. Nay, sure railing is the best qualification in a woman's man.

Enter FOOTMAN.

Sharp. The second best, indeed, I think.

Belin. [to FOOTMAN]. How now, Pace? Where's my cousin?

Foot. She's not very well, madam, and has sent to know if your ladyship would have the coach come again for you?

Belin. Oh, Lord, no: I'll go along with her. Come, Mr. Sharper. [Exeunt.]

Scene IV—*A Chamber in FONDLEWIFE'S House.*

Enter LÆTITIA and BELLMOUR, his cloak, hat, etc., lying loose about the chamber.

Bell. Here's nobody, nor no noise. 'Twas nothing but your fears.

Læt. I durst have sworn I had heard my monster's voice. I swear I was heartily frightened. Feel how my heart beats.

Bell. 'Tis an alarm to love. Come in again, and let us——

Fond. [without]. Cocky, Cocky, where are you, Cocky? I'm come home.

Læt. Ah! there he is. Make haste, gather up your things.

Fond. Cocky, Cocky, open the door.

Bell. Pox choke him, would his horns were in his throat. My patch, my patch.

[Looking about, and gathering up his things.]

Læt. My jewel, art thou there? No matter for your patch. You san't tome in, Nykin. Run into my chamber, quickly, quickly. You san't tome in. [BELLMOUR goes in.]

Fond. Nay, prithee, dear. Ifeck, I'm in haste.

Læt. Then I'll let you in. [Opens the door.]

Enter FONDLEWIFE and SIR JOSEPH.

Fond. Kiss, dear. I met the master of the ship by the way, and I must have my papers of accounts out of your cabinet.

Læt. [*aside*]. Oh, I'm undone.

Sir Jo. Pray, first let me have fifty pound, good alderman, for I'm in haste.

Fond. A hundred has already been paid by your order. Fifty? I have the sum ready in gold in my closet.

[*Goes into his closet.*]

Sir Jo. [*aside*]. Egad! it's a curious, fine, pretty rogue; I'll speak to her. [*Aloud.*] Pray, madam, what news d'ye hear?

Læt. Sir, I seldom stir abroad. [*Walks about in disorder.*]

Sir Jo. I wonder at that, madam, for 'tis most curious fine weather.

Læt. Methinks 't has been very ill weather.

Sir Jo. As you say, madam, 'tis pretty bad weather, and has been so a great while.

Enter FONDLEWIFE.

Fond. Here are fifty pieces in this purse, Sir Joseph. If you will tarry a moment, till I fetch my papers, I'll wait upon you downstairs.

Læt. [*aside*]. Ruined, past redemption! What shall I do? Ha! this fool may be of use. [*As FONDLEWIFE is going into the chamber, she runs to SIR JOSEPH, almost pushes him down, and cries out.*] Stand off, rude ruffian. Help me, my dear. Oh, bless me! Why will you leave me alone with such a satyr?

Fond. Bless us! What's the matter? What's the matter?

Læt. Your back was no sooner turned, but like a lion he came open-mouthed upon me, and would have ravished a kiss from me by main force.

Sir Jo. Oh, Lord! Oh, terrible! Ha, ha, ha! Is your wife mad, Alderman?

Læt. Oh! I'm sick with the fright. Won't you take him out of my sight?

Fond. Oh, traitor! I'm astonished. Oh, bloody-minded traitor!

Sir Jo. Hey-day! Traitor yourself! By the Lord Harry, I was in most danger of being ravished, if you go to that.

Fond. Oh, how the blasphemous wretch swears! Out of my house, thou son of the whore of Babylon, offspring of Bell and the Dragon. Bless us! Ravish my wife, my Dinah! Oh, Shechemite!* Begone, I say.

Sir Jo. Why, the devil's in the people, I think. [*Exit.*]

Læt. Oh, won't you follow and see him out of doors, my dear?

Fond. I'll shut this door to secure him from coming back. Give me the key of your cabinet, Cocky. Ravish my wife before my face! I warrant he's a Papist in his heart, at least, if not a Frenchman.

Læt. [*aside*]. What can I do now? [*Aloud.*] Oh! my dear, I have been in such a fright that I forgot to tell you poor Mr. Spintext has a sad fit of the cholic, and is forced to lie down upon our bed. You'll disturb him; I can tread softer.

Fond. Alack! poor man. No, no: you don't know the papers. I won't disturb him. Give me the key.

[*She gives him the key, goes to the chamber door, and speaks aloud.*]

Læt. 'Tis nobody but Mr. Fondlewife, Mr. Spintext. Lie still on your stomach; lying on your stomach will ease you of the colic.

Fond. Aye, aye, lie still, lie still; don't let me disturb you
[*Goes in.*]

Læt. Sure, when he does not see his face, he won't discover him. Dear fortune, help me but this once, and I'll never run in thy debt again. But this opportunity is the devil.

* Shechem was the ravisher of Dinah in Genesis.

FONDLEWIFE *returns with papers.*

Fond. Good lack! good lack! I profess, the poor man is in great torment, he lies as flat— Dear, you should heat a trencher, or a napkin. Where's Deborah? Let her clap some warm thing to his stomach, or chafe it with a warm hand, rather than fail. What book's this?

[Sees the book that BELLMOUR forgot.]

Læt. Mr. Spintext's Prayer Book, dear. *[Aside.]* Pray Heaven it be a Prayer Book.

Fond. Good man! I warrant he dropped it on purpose that you might take it up and read some of the pious ejaculations. *[Taking up the book.]* Oh, bless me! Oh, monstrous! A Prayer Book? Aye, this is the devil's Pater-noster. Hold! let me see. "The Innocent Adultery."*

Læt. *[aside]*. Misfortune! now all's ruined again.

Bell. *[peeping]*. Damned chance! If I had gone a-whoring with "The Practice of Piety" in my pocket, I had never been discovered.

Fond. Adultery, and innocent! Oh Lord! Here's doctrine! Aye, here's discipline!

Læt. Dear husband, I'm amazed. Sure it is a good book, and only tends to the speculation of sin.

Fond. Speculation! No, no: something went farther than speculation when I was not to be let in. Where is this apocryphal elder? I'll ferret him.

Læt. *[aside]*. I'm so distracted I can't think of a lie.

FONDLEWIFE *hauls out* BELLMOUR.

Fond. Come out here, thou Ananias incarnate. Who, how now? Who have we here?

Læt. Ha!

[Shrieks, as surprised.]

Fond. Oh, thou salacious woman! Am I then brutified? Aye, I feel it here. I sprout, I bud, I blossom, I am ripe—

* A novelette by Scarron.

horn-mad. But who in the devil's name are you? Mercy on me for swearing. But——

Læt. Oh, goodness keep us! Who's this? Who are you? What are you?

Bell. So?

Læt. In the name of the—— Oh! good my dear, don't come near it, I'm afraid 'tis the devil; indeed, it has hoofs, dear.

Fond. Indeed, and I have horns, dear. The devil, no, I am afraid, 'tis the flesh, thou harlot. Dear, with the pox. Come, siren, speak, confess. Who is this reverend, brawny pastor?

Læt. Indeed and indeed, now, my dear Nykin, I never saw this wicked man before.

Fond. Oh, it is a man then, it seems.

Læt. Rather, sure it is a wolf in the clothing of a sheep.

Fond. Thou art a devil in his proper clothing, woman's flesh. What, you know nothing of him but his fleece here? You don't love mutton?* You Magdalen unconverted.

Bell. [*aside*]. Well, now I know my cue. That is, very honourably to excuse her, and very impudently accuse myself.

Læt. Why then, I wish I may never enter into the heaven of your embraces again, my dear, if ever I saw his face before.

Fond. Oh Lord! Oh strange! I am in admiration of your impudence. Look at him a little better; he is more modest, I warrant you, than to deny it. Come, were you two never face to face before? Speak!

Bell. Since all artifice is vain, and I think myself obliged to speak the truth in justice to your wife, no.

Fond. Humph.

Læt. No, indeed, dear.

* "Food for lust" (N.E.D.).

Fond. Nay, I find you are both in a story; that I must confess. But, what—not to be cured of the cholic? Don't you know your patient, Mrs. Quack? Oh, lie upon your stomach; lying upon your stomach will cure you of the cholic. Ah! Answer me, Jezebel!

Læt. Let the wicked man answer for himself. Does he think that I have nothing to do but excuse him. 'Tis enough if I can clear my own innocence to my own dear.

Bell. [*aside*]. By my troth, and so 'tis. I have been a little too backward, that's the truth on't.

Fond. Come, sir, who are you, in the first place? And what are you?

Bell. A whore-master.

Fond. Very concise.

Læt. O beastly, impudent creature!

Fond. Well, sir, and what came you hither for?

Bell. To lie with your wife.

Fond. Good again. A very civil person this, and I believe speaks truth.

Læt. Oh, insupportable impudence!

Fond. Well, sir. Pray be covered. And you have, eh? You have finished the matter, eh? And I am, as I should be, a sort of a civil perquisite to a whore-master called a cuckold, eh? Is it not so? Come, I'm inclining to believe every word you say.

Bell. Why, faith, I must confess so I designed you. But you were a little unlucky in coming so soon, and hindered the making of your own fortune.

Fond. Humph. Nay, if you mince the matter once and go back of your word, you are not the person I took you for. Come, come, go on boldly. What, don't be ashamed of your profession. Confess, confess, I shall love thee the better for it, I shall, ifeck. What, dost think I don't know how to behave myself in the employment of a cuckold, and

have been three years apprentice to matrimony? Come, come, plain-dealing is a jewel.

Bell. Well, since I see thou art a good honest fellow, I'll confess the whole matter to thee.

Fond. Oh, I am a very honest fellow. You never lay with an honest man's wife in your life.

Læt. [*aside*]. How my heart aches! All my comfort lies in his impudence, and, Heaven be praised, he has a considerable portion.

Bell. In short, then, I was informed of the opportunity of your absence by my spy, for faith, honest Isaac, I have a long time designed thee this favour. I knew Spintext was to come by your direction. But I laid a trap for him, and procured his habit, in which I passed upon your servants, and was conducted hither. I pretended a fit of the cholic to excuse my lying down upon your bed, hoping that when she heard of it her good nature would bring her to administer remedies for my distemper. You know what might have followed. But like an uncivil person you knocked at the door, before your wife was come to me.

Fond. Ha! This is apocryphal; I may choose whether I will believe it or no.

Bell. That you may, faith, and I hope you won't believe a word on't. But I can't help telling the truth for my life.

Fond. How? Would not you have me believe you, say you?

Bell. No: for then you must of consequence part with your wife, and there will be some hopes of having her upon the public. Then the encouragement of a separate maintenance——

Fond. No, no: for that matter when she and I part she'll carry her separate maintenance about her.

Læt. Ah, cruel dear, how can you be so barbarous? You'll break my heart, if you talk of parting. [*Cries.*

Fond. Ah, dissembling vermin!

Bell. How can'st thou be so cruel, Isaac? Thou hast the heart of a mountain-tiger. By the faith of a sincere sinner, she's innocent for me. Go to him, madam, fling your snowy arms about his stubborn neck; bathe his relentless face in your salt trickling tears. [*She goes and hangs upon his neck, and kisses him. BELLMOUR kisses her hand behind FONDLEWIFE'S back.*] So, a few soft words, and a kiss, and the good man melts. See how kind nature works and boils over in him.

Læt. Indeed, my dear, I was but just coming downstairs, when you knocked at the door, and the maid told me Mr. Spintext was ill of the cholic upon our bed. And won't you speak to me, cruel Nykin? Indeed, I'll die, if you don't.

Fond. Ah! No, no, I cannot speak, my heart's so full. I have been a tender husband, a tender yoke-fellow. You know I have. But thou hast been a faithless Delilah, and the Philistines—— Eh? Art thou not vile and unclean, eh? Speak!

[*Weeping.*

Læt. No—o.

[*Sighing.*

Fond. Oh, that I could believe thee!

Læt. Oh, my heart will break. [*Seeming to faint.*

Fond. Eh, how? No, stay, stay, I will believe thee, I will. Pray bend her forward, sir.

Læt. Oh, oh! Where is my dear?

Fond. Here, here. I do believe thee. I won't believe my own eyes.

Bell. For my part, I am so charmed with the love of your turtle to you that I'll go and solicit matrimony with all my might and main.

Fond. Well, well, sir, as long as I believe it, 'tis well enough. No thanks to you, sir, for her virtue. But I'll show you the way out of my house, if you please. Come, my dear. Nay, I will believe thee, I do, ifeck.

Bell. See the great blessing of an easy faith; opinion cannot err.

No husband, by his wife, can be deceived;
She still is virtuous, if she's so believed.

ACT V

Scene I—*The Street.*

Enter BELLMOUR, in fanatic habit, and SETTER.

Bell. Setter! Well encountered.

Set. Joy of your return, sir. Have you made a good voyage, or have you brought your own lading back?

Bell. No, I have brought nothing but ballast back—made a delicious voyage, Setter; and might have rode at anchor in the port till this time, but the enemy surprised us. I would unrig.

HEARTWELL and LUCY appear at SILVIA's door.

Set. I attend you, sir.

Bell. Ha! Is not that Heartwell at Silvia's door? Be gone quickly, I'll follow you. I would not be known. Pox take 'em, they stand just in my way. [*Exit SETTER.*]

Heart. [*to LUCY*]. I'm impatient till it be done.

Lucy. That may be, without troubling yourself to go again for your brother's chaplain. Don't you see that stalking form of godliness?

Heart. Oh, aye: he's a fanatic.

Lucy. An executioner qualified to do your business. He has been lawfully ordained.

Heart. I'll pay him well, if you'll break the matter to him.

Lucy. I warrant you. Do you go and prepare your bride.

[*Exit HEARTWELL.*]

Bell. [*aside*]. Humph, sits the wind there? What a lucky

rogue am I! Oh, what sport will be here, if I can persuade this wench to secrecy.

Lucy. Sir: reverend sir.

Bell. Madam.

[*Discovers himself.*]

Lucy. Now, goodness have mercy upon me! Mr. Bellmour, is it you?

Bell. Even I. What dost think?

Lucy. Think? That I should not believe my eyes, and that you are not what you seem to be.

Bell. True. But to convince thee who I am, thou knowest my old token.

[*Kisses her.*]

Lucy. Nay, Mr. Bellmour. Oh Lard! I believe you are a parson in good earnest, you kiss so devoutly.

Bell. Well, your business with me, Lucy?

Lucy. I had none, but through mistake.

Bell. Which mistake you must go through with, Lucy. Come, I know the intrigue between Heartwell and your mistress; and you mistook me for Tribulation Spintext to marry 'em, ha? Are not matters in this posture? Confess. Come, I'll be faithful, I will, i' faith. What, diffide* in me, Lucy?

Lucy. Alas-a-day! You and Mr. Vainlove, between you, have ruined my poor mistress. You have made a gap in her reputation, and can you blame her if she make it up with a husband?

Bell. Well, is it as I say?

Lucy. Well, it is then. But you'll be secret?

Bell. Pooh, secret! Aye, and to be out of thy debt I'll trust thee with another secret. Your mistress must not marry Heartwell, Lucy.

Lucy. How! Oh Lord!

Bell. Nay, don't be in passion, Lucy. I'll provide a fitter husband for her. Come, here's earnest of my good inten-

* Mistrust.

tions for thee too. Let this mollify. [*Gives her money.*] Look you, Heartwell is my friend, and though he be blind, I must not see him fall into the snare and unwittingly marry a whore.

Lucy. Whore! I'd have you to know my mistress scorns——

Bell. Nay, nay. Look you, Lucy, there are whores of as good quality. But to the purpose, if you will give me leave to acquaint you with it. Do you carry on the mistake of me. I'll marry 'em. Nay, don't pause: if you do, I'll spoil all. I have some private reasons for what I do, which I'll tell you within. In the meantime, I promise, and rely upon me, to help your mistress to a husband. Nay, and thee too, Lucy. Here's my hand I will, with a fresh assurance. [*Gives her more money.*]

Lucy. Ah, the devil is not so cunning. You know my easy nature. Well, for once I'll venture to serve you; but if you do deceive me, the curse of all kind, tender-hearted women light upon you.

Bell. That's as much as to say, the pox take me. Well, lead on. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter VAINLOVE, SHARPER, and SETTER.

Sharp. Just now, say you, gone in with Lucy?

Setter. I saw him, sir, and stood at the corner where you found me, and overheard all they said. Mr. Bellmour is to marry 'em.

Sharp. Ha, ha! 'Twill be a pleasant cheat. I'll plague Heartwell when I see him. Prithee, Frank, let's tease him, make him fret till he foam at the mouth, and disgorge his matrimonial oath with interest. Come, thou'rt musty.

Setter. [*to SHARPER*]. Sir, a word with you.

[*Whispers him.*]

Vain. Sharper swears she has forsworn the letter. I'm sure he tells me truth; but I am not sure she told him truth. Yet she was unaffectedly concerned, he says, and often blushed with anger and surprise. And so I remember in the park. She had reason, if I wrong her. I begin to doubt.

Sharp. Sayest thou so!

Setter. This afternoon, sir, about an hour before my master received the letter.

Sharp. In my conscience, like enough.

Setter. Aye, I know her, sir. At least, I'm sure I can fish it out of her. She's the very sluice to her lady's secrets. 'Tis but setting her mill a-going, and I can drain her of 'em all.

Sharp. Here, Frank, your bloodhound has made out the fault. This letter, that so sticks in thy maw, is counterfeit, only a trick of Silvia in revenge, contrived by Lucy.

Vain. Ha! It has a colour. But how do you know it, sirrah?

Setter. I do suspect as much, because why, sir? She was pumping me about how your worship's affairs stood towards Madam Araminta, as when you had seen her last, when you were to see her next, and where were you to be found at that time, and suchlike.

Vain. And where did you tell her?

Setter. In the Piazza.

Vain. There I received the letter. It must be so. And why did you not find me out to tell me this before, sot?

Setter. Sir, I was pimping for Mr. Bellmour.

Sharp. You were well employed. I think there is no objection to the excuse.

Vain. Pox o' my saucy credulity. If I have lost her, I deserve it. But if confession and repentance be of force, I'll win her, or weary her into a forgiveness. [Exit.

Sharp. Methinks I long to see Bellmour come forth.

Enter BELLMOUR.

Setter. Talk of the devil! See where he comes.

Sharp. Hugging himself in his prosperous mischief. No real fanatic can look better pleased after a successful sermon of sedition.

Bell. Sharper, fortify thy spleen. Such a jest! Speak when thou art ready.

Sharp. Now, were I ill-natured, would I utterly disappoint thy mirth, hear thee tell thy mighty jest with as much gravity as a bishop hears venereal causes in the spiritual court, not so much as wrinkle my face with one smile, but let thee look simply and laugh by thyself.

Bell. Pshaw, no: I have a better opinion of thy wit. Gad! I defy thee.

Sharp. Were it not loss of time, you should make the experiment. But honest Setter here overheard you with Lucy, and has told me all.

Bell. Nay, then, I thank thee for not putting me out of countenance. But, to tell you something you don't know, I got an opportunity, after I had married 'em, of discovering the cheat to Silvia. She took it at first as another woman would the like disappointment; but my promise to make her amends quickly with another husband somewhat pacified her.

Sharp. But how the devil do you think to acquit yourself of your promise? Will you marry her yourself?

Bell. I have no such intentions at present. Prithee, wilt thou think a little for me? I am sure the ingenious Mr. Setter will assist.

Setter. Oh Lord, sir!

Bell. I'll leave him with you, and go shift my habit.

[*Exit.*

Enter SIR JOSEPH and BLUFFE.

Sharp. Eh! Sure fortune has sent this fool hither on purpose. Setter, stand close. Seem not to observe 'em, and harkee——

[Whispers.]

Bluffe. Fear him not. I am prepared for him now, and he shall find he might have safer roused a sleeping lion.

Sir Jo. Hush, hush! Don't you see him?

Bluffe. Show him to me. Where is he?

Sir Jo. Nay, don't speak so loud. I don't jest, as I did a little while ago. Look yonder! Egad! if he should hear the lion roar, he'd cudgel him into an ass and his primitive braying. Don't you remember the story in "Æsop's Fables," bully? Egad! there are good morals to be picked out of "Æsop's Fables," let me tell you that, and "Reynard the Fox" too.

Bluffe. Damn your morals.

Sir Jo. Prithee, don't speak so loud.

Bluffe [in a low voice]. Damn your morals: I must revenge th' affront done to my honour.

Sir Jo. [stealing away upon his tip-toes]. Aye, do, do, Captain, if you think fitting. You may dispose of your own flesh as you think fitting, d'ye see? But by the Lord Harry, I'll leave you.

Bluffe [almost whispering, and treading softly after him]. Prodigious! What, will you forsake your friend in extremity? You can't in honour refuse to carry him a challenge.

Sir Jo. Prithee, what do you see in my face, that looks as if I would carry a challenge? Honour is your province, Captain; take it. All the world knows me to be a knight, and a man of worship.

Setter [to SHARPER]. I warrant you, sir, I'm instructed.

Sharp. [aloud]. Impossible! Araminta, take a liking to a fool?

Setter. Her head runs on nothing else, nor she can talk of nothing else.

Sharp. I know she commended him all the while we were in the park; but I thought it had been only to make Vainlove jealous.

Sir Jo. How's this? Good bully, hold your breath, and let's hearken. Egad! this must be I.

Sharp. Death, it can't be. An oaf, an idiot, a wittol.

Sir Jo. Aye, now it's out. 'Tis I, my own individual person.

Sharp. A wretch, that has flown for shelter to the lowest shrub of mankind, and seeks protection from a blasted coward.

Sir Jo. That's you, bully Back.

[BLUFFE frowns upon SIR JOSEPH.]

Sharp. [to SETTER]. She has given Vainlove her promise to marry him before to-morrow morning. Has she not?

Setter. She has, sir; and I have it in charge to attend her all this evening in order to conduct her to the place appointed.

Sharp. Well, I'll go and inform your master, and do you press her to make all the haste imaginable. [Exit.]

Setter. Were I a rogue now, what a noble prize could I dispose of! A goodly pinnace, richly laden, and to launch forth under my auspicious convoy! Twelve thousand pounds, and all her rigging, besides what lies concealed under hatches! Ha! All this committed to my care! Avaunt, temptation! Setter, show thyself a person of worth; be true to thy trust, and be reputed honest. Reputed honest! Hum, is that all? Aye, for to be honest is nothing; the reputation of it is all. Reputation! What have such poor rogues as I to do with reputation? 'Tis above us, and for men of quality, they are above it. So that reputation is e'en as foolish a thing as honesty. And for

my part, if I meet Sir Joseph with a purse of gold in his hand, I'll dispose of mine to the best advantage.

Sir Jo. Hey, hey, hey! here 'tis for you, i'faith, Mr. Setter. Nay, I'll take you at your word.

[*Chinking a purse.*]

Setter. Sir Joseph, and the Captain too! Undone, undone! I'm undone, my master's undone, my lady's undone, and all the business is undone.

Sir Jo. No, no, never fear, man, the lady's business shall be done. What? Come, Mr. Setter, I have overheard all, and to speak is but loss of time; but if there be occasion, let these worthy gentlemen intercede for me [*Gives him gold.*]

Setter. Oh Lord, sir, what d'ye mean? Corrupt my honesty? They have indeed very persuading faces. But——

Sir Jo. 'Tis too little, there's more, man. There, take all. Now——

Setter. Well, Sir Joseph, you have such a winning way with you——

Sir Jo. And how, and how, good Setter, did the little rogue look, when she talked of Sir Joseph? Did not her eyes twinkle, and her mouth water? Did not she pull up her little bobbies? And—— Egad! I'm so overjoyed. And stroke down her belly, and then step aside to tie her garter, when she was thinking of her love? Eh, Setter?

Setter. Oh yes, sir.

Sir Jo. How now, Bully? What, melancholy because I'm in the ladies' favours? No matter, I'll make your peace. I know they were a little smart upon you, but I warrant I'll bring you into the lady's good graces.

Bluffe. Pshaw! I have petitions to show from other-guess toys than she. Look here! These were sent me this morning. There, read. [*Shows letters.*] That—that's a scrawl of quality. Here, here's from a countess too. Hum. No,

hold! That's from a knight's wife, she sent it me by her husband. But here, both these are from persons of great quality.

Sir Jo. They are either from persons of great quality or no quality at all, 'tis such a damned ugly hand.

[*While SIR JOSEPH reads, BLUFFE whispers SETTER.*

Setter. Captain, I would do anything to serve you; but this is so difficult.

Bluffe. Not at all. Don't I know him?

Setter. You'll remember the conditions?

Bluffe. I'll give 't you under my hand. In the meantime here's earnest. [*Gives him money.*] Come, knight, I'm capitulating with Mr. Setter for you.

Sir Jo. Ah! honest Setter. Sirrah, I'll give thee anything but a night's lodging. [*Exeunt.*

Enter SHARPER, tugging in HEARTWELL.

Sharp. Nay, prithee, leave railing and come along with me. Maybe she may not be within. 'Tis but to yond corner house.

Heart. Whither? Whither? Which corner house?

Sharp. Why, there: the two white posts.

Heart. And who would you visit there, say you?

[*Aside.*] O'ons, how my heart aches.

Sharp. Pshaw! thou'rt so troublesome and inquisitive. Why, I'll tell you. 'Tis a young creature that Vainlove debauched, and has forsaken. Did you never hear Bellmour chide him about Silvia?

Heart. [*aside*]. Death, and hell, and marriage! My wife!

Sharp. Why, thou art as musty as a new-married man, that had found his wife knowing the first night.

Heart. [*aside*]. Hell and the devil! Does he know it? But, hold! If he should not, I were a fool to discover it.

I'll dissemble, and try him. [*Aloud*]. Ha, ha, ha! Why, Tom, is that such an occasion of melancholy? Is it such an uncommon mischief?

Sharp. No, faith, I believe not. Few women but have their year of probation, before they are cloistered in the narrow joys of wedlock. But, prithee, come along with me, or I'll go and have the lady to myself. Bye, George!

[*Going*.

Heart. [*aside*]. Oh, torture! How he racks and tears me! Death! Shall I own my shame, or wittingly let him go and whore my wife? No, that's insupportable. [*Aloud*]. Oh, Sharper!

Sharp. How now?

Heart. Oh, I am—married.

Sharp. [*aside*]. Now hold spleen. [*Aloud*]. Married?

Heart. Certainly, irrecoverably married.

Sharp. Heaven forbid, man! How long?

Heart. Oh, an age, an age! I have been married these two hours.

Sharp. My old bachelor married! That were a jest. Ha, ha, ha!

Heart. Death! D'ye mock me? Hark ye, if either you esteem my friendship, or your own safety, come not near that house, that corner house, that hot brothel. Ask no questions. [*Exit*.

Sharp. Mad, by this light.

Thus grief still treads upon the heels of pleasure;

Married in haste, we may repent at leisure.

Setter. Some by experience find those words misplaced:

At leisure married, they repent in haste.

As I suppose my Master Heartwell.

Sharp. Here again, my Mercury!

Setter. Sublimate, if you please, sir. I think my achievements do deserve the epithet. Mercury was a pimp

too, but, though I blush to own it, at this time I must confess I am somewhat fallen from the dignity of my function, and do condescend to be scandalously employed in the promotion of vulgar matrimony.

Sharper. As how, dear dexterous pimp?

Setter. Why, to be brief, for I have weighty affairs depending, our stratagem succeeding as you intended, Bluffe turns arrant traitor, bribes me to make a private conveyance of the lady to him, and put a sham-settlement upon Sir Joseph.

Sharp. Oh, rogue! Well, but I hope——

Setter. No, no: never fear me, sir. I privately informed the knight of the treachery, who has agreed seemingly to be cheated that the Captain may be so in reality.

Sharp. Where's the bride?

Setter. Shifting clothes for the purpose at a friend's house of mine. Here's company coming. If you'll walk this way, sir, I'll tell you. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter BELLMOUR, BELINDA, ARAMINTA, and VAINLOVE.

Vain. [*to* ARAMINTA]. Oh, 'twas frenzy all. Cannot you forgive it? Men in madness have a title to your pity.

Aram. Which they forfeit, when they are restored to their senses.

Vain. I am not presuming beyond a pardon.

Aram. You who could reproach me with one counterfeit, how insolent would a real pardon make you! But there's no need to forgive what is not worth my anger.

Belin. [*to* BELLMOUR]. O' my conscience, I could find in my heart to marry thee purely to be rid of thee. At least thou art so troublesome a lover there's hopes thou'lt make a more than ordinary quiet husband.

Bell. Say you so? Is that a maxim among ye?

Belin. Yes. You fluttering men of the mode have made marriage a mere French dish.

Bell. [*aside*]. I hope there's no French sauce.*

Belin. You are so curious in the preparation, that is, your courtship, one would think you meant a noble entertainment. But when we come to feed, 'tis all froth and poor, but in show. Nay, often, only remains, which have been I know not how many times warmed for other company, and at last served up cold to the wife.

Bell. That were a miserable wretch, indeed, who could not afford one warm dish for the wife of his bosom. But you timorous virgins form a dreadful chimera of a husband, as of a creature contrary to that soft, humble, pliant, easy thing, a lover; so guess at plagues in matrimony in opposition to the pleasures of courtship. Alas! courtship to marriage is but as the music in the play-house, till the curtain's drawn; but that once up, then opens the scene of pleasure.

Belin. Oh, foh, no: rather, courtship to marriage as a very witty prologue to a very dull play.

Enter SHARPER.

Sharp. Hist! Bellmour, if you'll bring the ladies, make haste to Silvia's lodgings, before Heartwell has fretted himself out of breath.

Bell. [*to BELINDA*]. You have an opportunity now, madam, to revenge yourself upon Heartwell for affronting your squirrel.

Belin. Oh, the filthy rude beast.

Aram. 'Tis a lasting quarrel. I think he has never been at our house since.

Bell. But give yourselves the trouble to walk to that corner house, and I'll tell you by the way what may divert and surprise you. [*Exeunt.*

* Syphilis was known as the French disease.

Scene II—SILVIA's *Lodgings*.*Enter HEARTWELL and BOY.**Heart.* Gone forth, say you, with her maid?*Boy.* There was a man too that fetched 'em out. Setter, I think they called him.*Heart.* So—o? That precious pimp too. Damned, damned strumpet! Could she not contain herself on her wedding day, not hold out until night? [*Exit BOY.*] O cursed state! How wide we err, when apprehensive of the load of life,

We hope to find
That help which Nature meant in woman-kind,
To man that supplemental self designed,
But proves a burning caustic when applied,
And Adam, sure, could with more ease abide
The bone when broken, than when made a bride.

*Enter BELLMOUR, BELINDA, VAINLOVE and ARAMINTA.**Bell.* Now, George. What, rhyming! I thought the chimes of verse were past, when once the doleful marriage knell was rung.*Heart.* Shame and confusion. I am exposed.

[VAINLOVE and ARAMINTA talk apart.]

Belin. Joy, joy, Mr. Bridegroom! I give you joy, sir!*Heart.* 'Tis not in thy nature to give me joy. A woman can as soon give immortality.*Belin.* Ha, ha, ha! Oh gad! men grow such clowns when they are married.*Bell.* That they are fit for no company but their wives.*Belin.* Nor for them neither, in a little time. I swear, at the month's end, you shall hardly find a married man that will do a civil thing to his wife, or say a civil thing to anybody else. How he looks already! Ha, ha, ha!*Bell.* Ha, ha, ha!

Heart. Death! Am I made your laughing-stock? For you, sir, I shall find a time; but take off your wasp here, or the clown may grow boisterous. I have a fly-flap.

Belin. You have occasion for 't; your wife has been blown upon.

Bell. That's home.

Heart. Not fiends or furies could have added to my vexation, or anything, but another woman. You've racked my patience. Begone, or by——

Bell. Hold, hold! What the devil? Thou wilt not draw upon a woman!

Vain. What's the matter?

Aram. Bless me! What have you done to him?

Belin. Only touched a galled beast till he winched.*

Vain. Bellmour, give it over: you vex him too much. 'Tis all serious to him.

Belin. Nay, I swear I begin to pity him myself.

Heart. Damn your pity. But let me be calm a little. How have I deserved this of you? Any of ye? Sir, have I impaired the honour of your house, promised your sister marriage, and whored her? Wherein have I injured you? Did I bring a physician to your father when he lay expiring, and endeavour to prolong his life, and you one-and-twenty? Madam, have I had an opportunity with you and baulked it? Did you ever offer me the favour that I refused it? Or——

Belin. Oh foh! What does the filthy fellow mean? Lard, let me be gone.

Aram. Hang me, if I pity you; you are right enough served.

Bell. This is a little scurrilous though.

Vain. Nay, 'tis a sore of your own scratching. Well, George——

* Winced.

Heart. You are the principal cause of all my present ills. If Silvia had not been your mistress, my wife might have been honest.

Vain. And if Silvia had not been your wife, my mistress might have been just. There we are even. But have a good heart; I heard of your misfortune, and come to your relief.

Heart. When execution's over, you offer a reprieve.

Vain. What would you give?

Heart. Oh, anything, everything; a leg or two, or an arm. Nay, I would be divorced from my virility to be divorced from my wife.

Enter SHARPER.

Vain. Faith, that's a sure way, but here's one can sell you freedom better cheap.

Sharp. Vainlove, I have been a kind of a godfather to you, yonder. I have promised and vowed some things in your name, which I think you are bound to perform.

Vain. No signing to a blank, friend.

Sharp. No, I'll deal fairly with you. 'Tis a full and free discharge to Sir Joseph Wittoll and Captain Bluffe for all injuries whatsoever, done unto you by them, until the present date hereof. How say you?

Vain. Agreed.

Sharp. Then, let me beg these ladies to wear their masks a moment. Come in, gentlemen and ladies.

Heart. What the devil's all this to me?

Vain. Patience.

Enter SIR JOSEPH, BLUFFE, SILVIA, LUCY and SETTER.

Bluffe. All injuries whatsoever, Mr. Sharper.

Sir Jo. Aye, aye, whatsoever, Captain; stick to that, whatsoever.

Sharp. 'Tis done: these gentlemen are witnesses to the general release.

Vain. Aye, aye, to this instant moment. I have passed an act of oblivion.

Bluffe. 'Tis very generous, sir, since I needs must own——

Sir Jo. No, no, Captain, you need not own, he, he, he! 'Tis I must own.

Bluffe. That you are over-reached too, ha, ha, ha! Only a little art military used, only undermined, or so, as shall appear by the fair Araminta, my wife's permission. [*Lucy unmasks.*] Oh the devil, cheated at last!

Sir Jo. Only a little art military trick, Captain, only countermined, or so. Mr. Vainlove, I suppose you know whom I have got now; but all's forgiven.

Vain. I know whom you have not got. Pray, ladies, convince him. [*ARAMINTA and BELINDA unmask.*]

Sir Jo. Ah! Oh Lord, my heart aches. Ah, Setter, a rogue of all sides!

Sharp. Sir Joseph, you had better have pre-engaged this gentleman's pardon, for though Vainlove be so generous to forgive the loss of his mistress, I know not how Heartwell may take the loss of his wife. [*SILVIA unmasks.*]

Heart. My wife! By this light 'tis she, the very cockatrice. Oh, Sharper! Let me embrace thee. But art thou sure she is really married to him?

Setter. Really and lawfully married; I am witness.

Sharp. Bellmour will unriddle to you.

[*HEARTWELL goes to BELLMOUR.*]

Sir Jo. Pray, madam, who are you? For I find you and I are like to be better acquainted.

Silv. The worst of me is that I am your wife.

Sharp. Come, Sir Joseph, your fortune is not so bad as you fear. A fine lady, and a lady of very good quality.

Sir Jo. Thanks to my knighthood, she's a lady——
Vain. That deserves a fool with a better title. Pray use her as my relation, or you shall hear on't.

Bluffe. What, are you a woman of quality too, spouse?

Setter. And my relation. Pray let her be respected accordingly. Well, honest Lucy, fare thee well. I think you and I have been play-fellows off and on any time this seven years.

Lucy. Hold your prating. I'm thinking what vocation I shall follow while my spouse is planting laurels in the wars.

Bluffe. No more wars, spouse, no more wars. While I plant laurels for my head abroad, I may find the branches sprout at home.

Heart. Bellmour, I approve thy mirth, and thank thee. And I cannot in gratitude, for I see which way thou art going, see thee fall into the same snare, out of which thou hast delivered me.

Bell. I thank thee, George, for thy good intention. But there is a fatality in marriage, for I find I'm resolute.

Heart. Then good counsel will be thrown away upon you. For my part, I have once escaped, and when I wed again may she be—ugly as an old bawd.

Vain. Ill-natured as an old maid.

Bell. Wanton as a young widow.

Sharp. And jealous as a barren wife.

Heart. Agreed.

Bell. Well, 'midst of these dreadful denunciations, and notwithstanding the warning and example before me I commit myself to lasting durance.

Belin. Prisoner, make much of your fetters.

[Giving her hand.]

Bell. Frank, will you keep us in countenance?

Vain. May I presume to hope so great a blessing?

Aram. We had better take the advantage of a little of our friends' experience first.

Bell. [*aside*]. O' my conscience she dares not consent, for fear she should recant. [*Aloud.*] Well, we shall have your company to church in the morning. Maybe it may get you an appetite to see us fall to before ye. Setter, did not you tell me——

Setter. They're at the door; I'll call 'em in.

A Dance.

Bell. Now set we forward on a journey for life. Come, take your fellow-travellers. Old George, I'm sorry to see thee still plod on alone.

Heart. With gaudy plumes and jingling bells made proud
The youthful beast sets forth, and neighs aloud.
A morning-sun his tinselled harness gilds,
And the first stage a downhill green sward yields.
But, oh——
What rugged ways attend the noon of life!
Our sun declines and with what anxious strife,
What pain, we tug that galling load, a wife!
All coursers the first heat with vigour run;
But 'tis with whip and spur the race is won.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

EPILOGUE

Spoken by Mrs. Barry*

*As a rash girl, who will all hazards run,
 And be enjoyed, though sure to be undone,
 Soon as her curiosity is over,
 Would give the world she could her toy recover;
 So fares it with our poet, and I'm sent
 To tell you he already does repent.
 Would you were all as forward, to keep Lent!
 Now the deed's done, the giddy thing has leisure
 To think o' th' sting that's in the tail of pleasure.
 Methinks I hear him in consideration!
 What will the world say? Where's my reputation?
 Now that's at stake—no fool, 'tis out of fashion.
 If loss of that should follow want of wit,
 How many undone men were in the pit!
 Why that's some comfort to an author's fears,
 If he's an ass, he will be tried by 's peers.
 But hold! I am exceeding my commission:
 My business here was humbly to petition;
 But we're so used to rail on these occasions,
 I could not help one trial of your patience.
 For 'tis our way, you know, for fear o' th' worst,
 To be beforehand still, and cry fool first.
 How say you, sparks? How do you stand affected?
 I swear, young Bayes† within is so dejected,
 'Twould grieve your hearts to see him. Shall I call him?
 But then you cruel critics would so maul him!
 Yet, maybe, you'll encourage a beginner.
 But how? Just as the devil does a sinner.
 Women and wits are used e'en much at one,
 You gain your end, and damn 'em when you've done.*

* The first great English *tragédienne*.† The generic name for poets from the principal character in *The Rehearsal* by Buckingham, (1671).

THE
DOUBLE-DEALER

PROLOGUE

Spoken by Mrs. Bracegirdle*

*Moors have this way, as story tells, to know
Whether their brats are truly got or no:
Into the sea the new-born babe is thrown,
There, as instinct directs, to swim or drown;
A barbarous device to try if spouse
Has kept religiously her nuptial vows.*

*Such are the trials poets make of plays,
Only they trust to more inconstant seas.
So does our author this his child commit
To the tempestuous mercy of the pit,
To know if it be truly born of wit.*

*Critics, avaunt! For you are fish of prey,
And feed, like sharks, upon an infant play.
Be every monster of the deep away,
Let's have a fair trial and a clear sea.*

*Let nature work, and do not damn too soon,
For life will struggle long, ere it sink down,
And will at least rise thrice† before it drown.
Let us consider, had it been our fate
Thus hardly to be proved legitimate.
I will not say we'd all in danger been,
Were each to suffer for his mother's sin;*

* The original Cynthia.

† Even an indifferent play was acted at least three times, as the third night was the author's benefit-night.

*But by my troth I cannot avoid thinking
How nearly some good men might have 'scaped sinking.
But, Heaven be praised, this custom is confined
Alone to the offspring of the Muses, kind.
Our Christian cuckolds are more bent to pity;
I know not one Moor-husband in the city.
I' th' good man's arms the chopping bastard thrives,
For he thinks all his own that is his wife's.*

*Whatever fate is for this play designed,
The poet's sure he shall some comfort find:
For if his Muse has played him false, the worst
That can befall him is to be divorced;
You husbands judge if that be to be cursed!*

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MASKWELL, a villain, pretended friend to MELLEFONT, gallant to LADY TOUCHWOOD, and in love with CYNTHIA.

LORD TOUCHWOOD, uncle to MELLEFONT.

MELLEFONT, promised to, and in love with, CYNTHIA.

CARELESS, his friend.

LORD FROTH, a solemn coxcomb.

BRISK, a pert coxcomb.

SIR PAUL PLYANT, an uxorious, foolish old knight, brother to LADY TOUCHWOOD and father to CYNTHIA.

LADY TOUCHWOOD, in love with MELLEFONT.

CYNTHIA, daughter to SIR PAUL by a former wife, promised to MELLEFONT.

LADY FROTH, a great coquette, pretender to poetry, wit and learning.

LADY PLYANT, insolent to her husband and easy to any pretender.

Chaplain, Boy, Footmen, and Attendants.

The SCENE—a gallery in the LORD TOUCHWOOD's house, with chambers adjoining.

The TIME—from five o'clock to eight in the evening.

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THE DOUBLE-DEALER

ACT I

Scene I—*A Gallery in the LORD TOUCHWOOD's House,
with Chambers adjoining.*

Enter CARELESS, crossing the stage, with his hat, gloves and sword in his hands, as just risen from table, MELLEFONT following him.

Mel. Ned, Ned, whither so fast? What, turned flincher? Why, you wo' not leave us?

Care. Where are the women? I am weary of guzzling, and begin to think them the better company.

Mel. Then thy reason staggers, and thou'rt almost drunk.

Care. No, faith, but your fools grow noisy, and if a man must endure the noise of words without sense, I think the women have more musical voices, and become nonsense better.

Mel. Why, they are at the end of the gallery, retired to their tea and scandal, according to their ancient custom after dinner. But I made a pretence to follow you, because I had something to say to you in private, and I am not like to have many opportunities this evening.

Care. And here's this coxcomb most critically come to interrupt you.

Enter BRISK.

Brisk. Boys, boys, lads, where are you? What, do you give ground? Mortgage for a bottle, ha? Careless, this is your trick; you're always spoiling company by leaving it.

Care. And thou art always spoiling company by coming into 't.

Brisk. Pooh, ha, ha, ha! I know you envy me. Spite, proud spite, by the gods! and burning envy. I'll be judged by Mellefont here who gives and takes raillery better, you or I. Pshaw, man, when I say you spoil company by leaving it I mean you leave nobody for the company to laugh at. I think there I was with you, ha, Mellefont?

Mel. O' my word, Brisk, that was a home thrust; you have silenced him.

Brisk. Oh, my dear Mellefont, let me perish if thou art not the soul of conversation, the very essence of wit and spirit of wine. The deuce take me if there were three good things said, or one understood, since thy amputation from the body of our society. He, I think that's pretty and metaphorical enough. Egad! I could not have said it out of thy company. Careless, ha?

Care. Hum, aye, what is it?

Brisk. Oh, *mon cœur!* What is it? Nay, gad, I'll punish you for want of apprehension. The deuce take me if I tell you.

Mel. No, no, hang him, he has no taste. But, dear Brisk, excuse me, I have a little business.

Care. Prithee, get thee gone; thou see'st we are serious.

Mel. We'll come immediately if you'll but go in and keep up good humour and sense in the company. Prithee, do, they'll fall asleep else.

Brisk. Egad! so they will. Well, I will, I will: gad, you shall command me from the zenith to the nadir. But the deuce take me if I say a good thing till you come. But, prithee, dear rogue, make haste, prithee, make haste, I shall burst else. And yonder your uncle, my Lord Touchwood, swears he'll disinherit you, and Sir Paul Plyant threatens to disclaim you for a son-in-law, and my Lord Froth won't dance at your wedding to-morrow, nor the

deuce take me, I won't write your epithalamium—and see what a condition you're like to be brought to.

Mel. Well, I'll speak but three words and follow you.

Brisk. Enough, enough: Careless, bring your apprehension along with you. [Exit.]

Care. Pert coxcomb.

Mel. Faith, 'tis a good-natured coxcomb, and has very entertaining follies. You must be more humane to him; at this juncture it will do me service. I'll tell you, I would have mirth continued this day at any rate, though patience purchase folly and attention be paid with noise. There are times when sense may be unseasonable as well as truth. Prithee, do thou wear none to-day, but allow Brisk to have wit that thou may'st seem a fool.

Care. Why, how now, why this extravagant proposition?

Mel. Oh, I would have no room for serious design, for I am jealous of a plot. I would have noise and impertinence keep my Lady Touchwood's head from working, for hell is not more busy than her brain, nor contains more devils than that imaginations.

Care. I thought your fear of her had been over. Is not to-morrow appointed for your marriage with Cynthia, and her father, Sir Paul Plyant, come to settle the writings this day on purpose?

Mel. True: but you shall judge whether I have not reason to be alarmed. None besides you and Maskwell are acquainted with the secret of my Aunt Touchwood's violent passion for me. Since my first refusal of her addresses she has endeavoured to do me all ill offices with my uncle, yet has managed 'em with that subtlety that to him they have borne the face of kindness, while her malice, like a dark lantern, only shone upon me where it was directed. Still, it gave me less perplexity to prevent the success of her displeasure than to avoid the importunities

of her love, and of two evils I thought myself favoured in her aversion. But whether urged by her despair, and the short prospect of time she saw to accomplish her designs, whether the hopes of revenge, or of her love, terminated in the view of this my marriage with Cynthia, I know not, but this morning she surprised me in my bed.

Care. Was there ever such a fury? 'Tis well Nature has not put it into her sex's power to ravish. Well, bless us, proceed. What followed?

Mel. What at first amazed me, for I looked to have seen her in all the transports of a slighted and revengeful woman; but when I expected thunder from her voice and lightning in her eyes, I saw her melted into tears and hushed into a sigh. It was long before either of us spoke, passion had tied her tongue, and amazement mine. In short, the consequence was thus: she omitted nothing that the most violent love could urge or tender words express, which when she saw had no effect, but still I pleaded honour and nearness of blood to my uncle, then came the storm I feared at first, for starting from my bedside like a fury, she flew to my sword, and with much ado I prevented her doing me or herself a mischief. Having disarmed her, in a gust of passion she left me, and in a resolution, confirmed by a thousand curses, not to close her eyes till they had seen my ruin.

Care. Exquisite woman! But what the devil, does she think thou hast no more sense than to get an heir upon her body to disinherit thyself? For as I take it this settlement upon you is with a proviso, that your uncle have no children.

Mel. It is so. Well, the service you are to do me will be a pleasure to yourself. I must get you to engage my Lady Plyant all this evening, that my pious aunt may not work her to her interest, and if you chance to secure her to your-

self, you may incline her to mine. She's handsome, and knows it, is very silly, and thinks she has sense, and has an old fond husband.

Care. I confess, a very fair foundation for a lover to build upon.

Mel. For my Lord Froth, he and his wife will be sufficiently taken up with admiring one another and Brisk's gallantry, as they call it. I'll observe my uncle myself, and Jack Maskwell has promised me to watch my aunt narrowly and give me notice upon any suspicion. As for Sir Paul, my wise father-in-law that is to be, my dear Cynthia has such a share in his fatherly fondness he would scarce make her a moment uneasy, to have her happy hereafter.

Care. So. You have manned your works, but I wish you may not have the weakest guard where the enemy is strongest.

Mel. Maskwell, you mean. Prithee, why should you suspect him?

Care. Faith, I cannot help it. You know I never liked him; I am a little superstitious in physiognomy.

Mel. He has obligations of gratitude to bind him to me; his dependence upon my uncle is through my means.

Care. Upon your aunt, you mean.

Mel. My aunt!

Care. I'm mistaken if there be not a familiarity between them you do not suspect, notwithstanding her passion for you.

Mel. Pooh, pooh, nothing in the world but his design to do me service. And he endeavours to be well in her esteem that he may be able to effect it.

Care. Well, I shall be glad to be mistaken; but your aunt's aversion in her revenge cannot be anyway so effectually shown as in bringing forth a child to disinherit you. She is handsome and cunning, and naturally wanton.

Maskwell is flesh and blood at best, and opportunities between them are frequent. His affection to you, you have confessed, is grounded upon his interest, that you have transplanted; and should it take root in my lady, I don't see what you can expect from the fruit.

Mel. I confess the consequence is visible were your suspicions just. But see, the company is broke up. Let's meet 'em.

Enter LORD TOUCHWOOD, LORD FROTH, SIR PAUL PLYANT and BRISK.

Lord Touch. Out upon 't, nephew. Leave your father-in-law and me to maintain our ground against young people.

Mel. I beg your lordship's pardon. We were just returning.

Sir Paul. Were you, son? Gadsbud, much better as it is. Good, strange! I swear I'm almost tipsy. 'Tother bottle would have been too powerful for me, as sure as can be it would. We wanted your company, but Mr. Brisk. Where is he? I swear and vow he's a most facetious person, and the best company. And, my Lord Froth, your lordship is so merry a man, he, he, he!

Lord Froth. Oh, fie, Sir Paul, what do you mean? Merry! Oh, barbarous! I'd as lief you called me fool.

Sir Paul. Nay, I protest and vow now, 'tis true. When Mr. Brisk jokes, your lordship's laugh does so become you, he, he, he!

Lord Froth. Ridiculous! Sir Paul, you're strangely mistaken. I find champagne is powerful. I assure you, Sir Paul, I laugh at nobody's jest but my own, or a lady's. I assure you, Sir Paul.

Brisk. How? How, my lord? What, affront my wit! Let me perish, do I never say anything worthy to be laughed at?

Lord Froth. Oh, foy, don't misapprehend me. I don't say so, for I often smile at your conceptions. But there is nothing more unbecoming a man of quality than to laugh. 'Tis such a vulgar expression of the passion! Everybody can laugh. Then especially to laugh at the jest of an inferior person, or when anybody else of the same quality does not laugh with one! Ridiculous! To be pleased with what pleases the crowd! Now when I laugh, I always laugh alone.

Brisk. I suppose that's because you laugh at your own jests, egad! Ha, ha, ha!

Lord Froth. He, he! I swear though, your raillery provokes me to a smile.

Brisk. Aye, my lord, it's a sign I hit you in the teeth, if you show 'em.

Lord Froth. He, he, he! I swear that's so very pretty, I can't forbear.

Care. I find a quibble* bears more sway in your lordship's face than a jest.

Lord Touch. Sir Paul, if you please we'll retire to the ladies, and drink a dish of tea to settle our heads.

Sir Paul. With all my heart. Mr. Brisk, you'll come to us, or call me when you joke. I'll be ready to laugh incontinently.

[*Exeunt* LORD TOUCHWOOD and SIR PAUL.]

Mel. But does your lordship never see comedies?

Lord Froth. Oh, yes, sometimes, but I never laugh.

Mel. No?

Lord Froth. Oh, no. Never laugh indeed, sir.

Care. No! Why what d'ye go there for?

Lord Froth. To distinguish myself from the commonalty, and mortify the poets. The fellows grow so conceited, when

* Pun.

any of their foolish wit prevails upon the side-boxes.* I swear, he, he, he! I have often constrained my inclinations to laugh, he, he, he! to avoid giving them encouragement.

Mel. You are cruel to yourself, my lord, as well as malicious to them.

Lord Froth. I confess I did myself some violence at first, but now I think I have conquered it.

Brisk. Let me perish, my lord, but there is something very particular in the humour. 'Tis true it makes against wit, and I'm sorry for some friends of mine that write, but, egad! I love to be malicious. Nay, deuce take me, there's wit in 't too. And wit must be foiled by wit. Cut a diamond with a diamond, no other way, egad!

Lord Froth. Oh, I thought you would not be long before you found out the wit.

Care. Wit! In what? Where the devil's the wit in not laughing when a man has a mind to 't.

Brisk. Oh, Lord, why can't you find it out? Why there 'tis, in the not laughing. Don't you apprehend me? My lord, Careless is a very honest fellow, but harkee, you understand me, somewhat heavy, a little shallow, or so. Why, I'll tell you now, suppose now you come up to me. Nay, prithee, Careless, be instructed. Suppose, as I was saying, you come up to me holding your sides, and laughing as if you would——. Well, I look grave and ask the cause of this immoderate mirth. You laugh on still, and are not able to tell me. Still I look grave, not so much as smile.

Care. Smile, no: what the devil should you smile at, when you suppose I can't tell you!

Brisk. Pshaw, pshaw! prithee, don't interrupt me. But I tell you you shall tell me, at last. But it shall be a great while first.

* The side-boxes were sacred to the fops.

Care. Well, but, prithee, don't let it be a great while, because I long to have it over.

Brisk. Well then, you tell me some good jest, or very witty thing, laughing all the while as if you were ready to die, and I hear it, and look thus. Would not you be disappointed?

Care. No: for if it were a witty thing I should not expect you to understand it.

Lord Froth. Oh, foy, Mr. Careless, all the world allows Mr. Brisk to have wit. My wife says he has a great deal. I hope you think her a judge.

Brisk. Pooh, my lord, his voice goes for nothing. I can't tell how to make him apprehend. Take it tother way. Suppose I say a witty thing to you?

Care. Then I shall be disappointed indeed.

Mel. Let him alone, Brisk; he is obstinately bent not to be instructed.

Brisk. I'm sorry for him, the deuce take me.

Mel. Shall we go to the ladies, my lord?

Lord Froth. With all my heart: methinks we are a solitude without 'em.

Mel. Or what say you to another bottle of champagne?

Lord Froth. Oh, for the universe, not a drop more, I beseech you. Oh, intemperate! I have a flushing in my face already. [*Takes out a pocket-glass, and looks in it.*]

Brisk. Let me see, let me see, my lord. I broke my glass that was in the lid of my snuff-box. Hum! Deuce take me, I have encouraged a pimple here too.

[*Takes the glass and looks.*]

Lord Froth. Then you must mortify him with a patch; my wife shall supply you. Come, gentlemen, *allons*; here is company coming. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter LADY TOUCHWOOD and MASKWELL.

Lady Touch. I'll hear no more. You're false and ungrateful. Come, I know you false.

Mask. I have been frail, I confess, madam, for your ladyship's service.

Lady Touch. That I should trust a man, whom I had known betray his friend!

Mask. What friend have I betrayed? Or to whom?

Lady Touch. Your fond friend, Mellefont, and to me. Can you deny it?

Mask. I do not.

Lady Touch. Have you not wronged my lord, who has been a father to you in your wants, and given you being? Have you not wronged him in the highest manner, in his bed?

Mask. With your ladyship's help, and for your service, as I told you before. I can't deny that neither. Anything more, madam?

Lady Touch. More! Audacious villain. Oh, what's more, is most my shame. Have you not dishonoured me?

Mask. No, that I deny: for I never told in all my life. So that accusation's answered; on to the next.

Lady Touch. Death, do you dally with my passion? Insolent devil! But have a care; provoke me not, for by the eternal fire you shall not escape my vengeance. Calm villain! How unconcerned he stands, confessing treachery and ingratitude! Is there a vice more black? Oh, I have excuses, thousands, for my faults, fire in my temper, passions in my soul, apt to every provocation, oppressed at once with love and with despair. But a sedate, a thinking villain, whose black blood runs temperately bad, what excuse can clear?

Mask. Will you be in temper,* madam? I would not talk not to be heard. I have been—[*she walks about disordered*]

* i.e., temperate.

—a very great rogue for your sake, and you reproach me with it. I am ready to be a rogue still, to do you service, and you are flinging conscience and honour in my face to rebate my inclinations. How am I to behave myself? You know I am your creature, my life and fortune in your power; to disoblige you brings me certain ruin. Allow it, I would betray you, I would not be a traitor to myself. I don't pretend to honesty, because you know I am a rascal. But I would convince you, from the necessity of my being firm to you.

Lady Touch. Necessity, impudence! Can no gratitude incline you, no obligations touch you? Have not my fortune and my person been subjected to your pleasure? Were you not in the nature of a servant, and have not I in effect made you lord of all, of me, and of my lord? Where is that humble love, the languishing, that adoration, which once was paid me, and everlastingly engaged?

Mask. Fixed, rooted in my heart, whence nothing can remove 'em, yet you——

Lady Touch. Yet, what yet?

Mask. Nay, misconceive me not, madam, when I say I have had a generous and a faithful passion, which you had never favoured, but through revenge and policy.

Lady Touch. Ha!

Mask. Look you, madam, we are alone. Pray contain yourself and hear me. You know you loved your nephew, when I first sighed for you. I quickly found it, an argument that I loved; for with that art you veiled your passion, 'twas imperceptible to all but jealous eyes. This discovery made me bold; I confess it, for by it I thought you in my power. Your nephew's scorn of you added to my hopes. I watched the occasion, and took you, just repulsed by him, warm at once with love and indignation. Your disposition, my arguments, and happy opportunity, accom-

plished my design. I pressed the yielding minute, and was blessed. How I have loved you since words have not shown, then how should words express?

Lady Touch. Well, mollifying devil! And have I not met your love with forward fire?

Mask. Your zeal I grant was ardent, but misplaced. There was revenge in view. That woman's idol had defiled the temple of the god, and love was made a mock-worship. A son and heir would have edged young Mellefont upon the brink of ruin, and left him none but you to catch at for prevention.

Lady Touch. Again provoke me! Do you wind me like a larum, only to rouse my own stilled soul for your diversion? Confusion!

Mask. Nay, madam, I'm gone, if you relapse. What needs this? I say nothing but what you yourself, in open hours of love, have told me. Why should you deny it? Nay, how can you? Is not all this present heat owing to the same fire? Do you not love him still? How have I this day offended you, but in not breaking off his match with Cynthia? Which ere to-morrow shall be done, had you but patience.

Lady Touch. How, what said you, Maskwell? Another caprice to unwind my temper?

Mask. By Heaven, no: I am your slave, the slave of all your pleasures, and will not rest till I have given you peace, would you suffer me.

Lady Touch. Oh, Maskwell, in vain I do disguise me from thee. Thou knowest me, knowest the very inmost windings and recesses of my soul. Oh, Mellefont, I burn! Married to-morrow! Despair strikes me. Yet my soul knows I hate him too. Let him but once be mine, and next immediate ruin seize him.

Mask. Compose yourself. You shall possess and ruin him too. Will that please you?

Lady Touch. How, how? Thou dear, thou precious villain, how?

Mask. You have already been tampering with my Lady Plyant.

Lady Touch. I have: she is ready for any impression I think fit.

Mask. She must be thoroughly persuaded that Mellefont loves her.

Lady Touch. She is so credulous that way naturally, and likes him so well, that she will believe it faster than I can persuade her. But I don't see what you can propose from such a trifling design, for her first conversing with Mellefont will convince her of the contrary.

Mask. I know it; I don't depend upon it. But it will prepare something else and gain us leisure to lay a stronger plot. If I gain a little time I shall not want contrivance.

One minute gives invention to destroy,
What, to rebuild, will a whole age employ.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT II

Scene I—*A Gallery in the LORD TOUCHWOOD'S House.*

Enter LADY FROTH and CYNTHIA.

Cynth. Indeed, madam! Is it possible your ladyship could have been so much in love?

Lady Froth. I could not sleep. I did not sleep one wink for three weeks together.

Cynth. Prodigious! I wonder want of sleep, and so much love, and so much wit as your ladyship has, did not turn your brain.

Lady Froth. Oh, my dear Cynthia, you must not rally

your friend. But really, as you say, I wonder too. But then I had a way, for between you and I, I had whimsies and vapours, but I gave them vent.

Cynth. How, pray, madam?

Lady Froth. Oh, I writ, writ abundantly. Do you never write?

Cynth. Write what?

Lady Froth. Songs, elegies, satires, enconiums, panegyrics, lampoons, plays, or heroic poems.

Cynth. Oh, Lord, not I, madam. I'm content to be a courteous reader.

Lady Froth. Oh, inconsistent! In love, and not write! If my lord and I had been both of your temper we had never come together. Oh, bless me! What a sad thing would that have been, if my lord and I should never have met!

Cynth. Then neither my lord nor you would ever have met with your match, on my conscience.

Lady Froth. O' my conscience, no more we should. Thou sayest right. For sure my Lord Froth is as fine a gentleman, and as much a man of quality! Ah! nothing at all of the common air. I think I may say he wants nothing but a blue ribbon and a star to make him shine the very phosphorus of our hemisphere. Do you understand those two hard words? If you don't, I'll explain 'em to you.

Cynth. [*aloud*]. Yes, yes, madam, I'm not so ignorant. [*Aside*]. At least, I won't own it, to be troubled with your instructions.

Lady Froth. Nay, I beg your pardon, but being derived from the Greek I thought you might have escaped the etymology. But I'm the more amazed to find you a woman of letters and not write! Bless me! How can Mellefont believe you love him?

Cynth. Why, faith, madam, he that won't take my word shall never have it under my hand.

Lady Froth. I vow Mellefont's a pretty gentleman, but methinks he wants a manner.

Cynth. A manner! What's that, madam?

Lady Froth. Some distinguishing quality, as for example the *bel air* or brillant of Mr. Brisk, the solemnity, yet complaisance, of my lord, or something of his own that should look a little *je-ne-sais-quoi-ish*. He is too much a mediocrity, in my mind.

Cynth. He does not indeed affect either pertness or formality, for which I like him. Here he comes.

Lady Froth. And my lord with him. Pray observe the difference.

Enter LORD FROTH, MELLEFONT, and BRISK.

Cynth. [*aside*]. Impertinent creature! I could almost be angry with her now.

Lady Froth. My lord, I have been telling Cynthia how much I have been in love with you. I swear I have. I'm not ashamed to own it now. Ah! it makes my heart leap. I vow I sigh when I think on 't. My dear lord! Ha, ha, ha! do you remember, my lord?

[*Squeezes him by the hand, looks kindly on him, sighs and then laughs out.*]

Lord Froth. Pleasant creature! Perfectly well. Ah! that look, aye, there it is, who could resist? 'Twas so my heart was made a captive first, and ever since 't has been in love with happy slavery.

Lady Froth. Oh, that tongue, that dear deceitful tongue! That charming softness in your mien and your expression, and then your bow! Good, my lord, bow as you did when I gave you my picture. Here, suppose this my picture. [*Gives him a pocket-glass.*] Pray, mind my lord. Ah! he

bows charmingly. Nay, my lord, you shan't kiss it so much. I shall grow jealous, I vow now.

[He bows profoundly low, then kisses the glass.]

Lord Froth. I saw myself there, and kissed it for your sake.

Lady Froth. Ah! gallantry to the last degree! Mr. Brisk, you're a judge. Was ever anything so well bred as my lord?

Brisk. Never anything, but your ladyship, let me perish.

Lady Froth. Oh, prettily turned again! Let me die but you have a great deal of wit. Mr. Mellefont, don't you think Mr. Brisk has a world of wit?

Mel. Oh yes, madam.

Brisk. Oh dear, madam.

Lady Froth. An infinite deal!

Brisk. Oh heavens, madam!

Lady Froth. More wit than anybody.

Brisk. I'm everlastingly your humble servant, deuce take me, madam.

Lord Froth *[to CYNTHIA]*. Don't you think us a happy couple?

Cynth. I vow, my lord, I think you the happiest couple in the world, for you're not only happy in one another and when you are together, but happy in yourselves and by yourselves.

Lord Froth. I hope Mellefont will make a good husband too.

Cynth. 'Tis my interest to believe he will, my lord.

Lord Froth. D'ye think he'll love you as well as I do my wife? I'm afraid not.

Cynth. I believe he'll love me better.

Lord Froth. Heavens! that can never be. But why do you think so?

Cynth. Because he has not so much reason to be fond of himself,

Lord Froth. Oh, your humble servant for that, dear madam. Well, Mellefont, you'll be a happy creature.

Mel. Aye, my lord, I shall have the same reason for my happiness that your lordship has. I shall think myself happy.

Lord Froth. Ah! that's all.

Brisk [*to* LADY FROTH]. Your ladyship is in the right; but egad! I'm wholly turned into satire. I confess I write but seldom, but when I do—keen iambics, egad! But my lord was telling me your ladyship has made an essay toward an heroic poem.

Lady Froth. Did my lord tell you? Yes, I vow, and the subject is my lord's love to me. And what do you think I call it? I dare swear you won't guess. The Sillabub*, ha, ha, ha!

Brisk. Because my lord's title is Froth, egad! ha, ha, ha! Deuce take me, very apropos and surprising, ha, ha, ha!

Lady Froth. Eh! aye, is not it? And then I call my lord Spumoso, and myself, what d'ye think I call myself?

Brisk. Lactilla maybe? Gad, I cannot tell.

Lady Froth. Biddy, that's all. Just my own name.

Brisk. Biddy! Egad, very pretty. Deuce take me if your ladyship has not the art of surprising the most naturally in the world. I hope you'll make me happy in communicating the poem.

Lady Froth. Oh, you must be my confidant. I must ask your advice.

Brisk. I'm your humble servant, let me perish. I presume your ladyship has read Bossu?

Lady Froth. Oh yes, and Rapin, and Dacier upon Aristotle and Horace.† My lord, you must not be jealous. I'm communicating all to Mr. Brisk.

* A mixture of wine, or cider, and milk.

† Le Bossu, Rapin and Dacier were contemporary French critics of the strictest sect.

Lord Froth. No, no, I'll allow Mr. Brisk. Have you nothing about you to show him, my dear?

Lady Froth. Yes, I believe I have. Mr. Brisk, come, will you go into the next room, and there I'll show you what I have? *[Exit LADY FROTH and BRISK.]*

Lord Froth. I'll walk a turn in the garden and come to you. *[Exit.]*

Mel. You're thoughtful, Cynthia?

Cynth. I'm thinking, though marriage makes man and wife one flesh, it leaves 'em still two fools, and they become more conspicuous by setting off one another.

Mel. That's only when two fools meet and their follies are opposed.

Cynth. Nay, I have known two wits meet, and by the opposition of their wit, render themselves as ridiculous as fools. 'Tis an odd game we're going to play at. What think you of drawing stakes and giving over in time?

Mel. No, hang 't, that's not endeavouring to win, because it's possible we may lose. Since we have shuffled and cut, let's e'en turn up trump now.

Cynth. Then I find it's like cards. If either of us have a good hand it is an accident of fortune.

Mel. No: marriage is rather like a game of bowls. Fortune indeed makes the match, and the two nearest and sometimes the two farthest are together, but the game depends entirely upon judgment.

Cynth. Still, it is a game, and consequently one of us must be a loser.

Mel. Not at all: only a friendly trial of skill, and the winnings to be laid out in an entertainment. *[Musicians crossing the stage.]* What's here, the music? Oh, my lord has promised the company a new song. We'll get 'em to give it us by the way. *[To the MUSICIANS.]* Pray, let us

have the favour of you to practise the song, before the company hear it.

Cynthia frowns whene'er I woo her,
Yet she's vexed if I give over;
Much she fears I should undo her,
But much more to lose her lover.
Thus, in doubting, she refuses,
And not winning, thus she loses.

Prithee, Cynthia, look behind you.
Age and wrinkles will o'ertake you;
Then too late desire will find you,
When the power must forsake you.
Think, oh think, o' th' sad condition
To be past yet wish fruition.

Mel. [*to the MUSICIANS*]. You shall have my thanks below. [*They go out.*]

Enter SIR PAUL PLYANT and LADY PLYANT.

Sir Paul. Gadsbud! I am provoked into a fermentation, as my Lady Froth says. Was ever the like read of in story?

Lady Plyant. Sir Paul, have patience. Let me alone to rattle him up.

Sir Paul. Pray, your ladyship, give me leave to be angry. I'll rattle him up, I warrant you. I'll firk him with a *certiorari*.*

Lady Plyant. You firk him! I'll firk him myself. Pray, Sir Paul, hold you contented.

Cynth. [*aside*]. Bless me, what makes my father in such a passion? I never saw him thus before.

Sir Paul. Hold yourself contented, my Lady Plyant. I find passion coming upon me by inflation, and I cannot submit as formerly. Therefore give way.

* Chastise him with a Chancery writ.

Lady Plyant. How now! will you be pleased to retire, and——

Sir Paul. No, marry, will I not be pleased. I am pleased to be angry. That's my pleasure at this time.

Mel. [aside]. What can this mean?

Lady Plyant. Gads my life, the man's distracted. Why, how now, who are you? What am I? 'Slidikins, can't I govern you? What did I marry you for? Am I not to be absolute and uncontrollable? Is it fit a woman of my spirit and conduct should be contradicted in a matter of this concern?

Sir Paul. It concerns me, and only me. Besides, I'm not to be governed at all times. When I am in tranquillity, my Lady Plyant shall command Sir Paul; but when I am provoked to fury, I cannot incorporate with patience and reason. As soon may tigers match with tigers, lambs with lambs, and every creature couple with its foe, as the poet says.

Lady Plyant. He's hotheaded still. 'Tis in vain to talk to you; but remember I have a curtain-lecture for you, you disobedient, headstrong brute.

Sir Paul. No, 'tis because I won't be headstrong, because I won't be a brute, and have my head fortified, that I am thus exasperated. But I will protect my honour, and yonder is the violater of my fame.

Lady Plyant. 'Tis my honour that is concerned, and the violation was intended to me. Your honour! You have none but what is in my keeping, and I can dispose of it when I please. Therefore don't provoke me.

Sir Paul [aside]. Hum, gadsbud, she says true. [*Aloud.*] Well, my lady, march on. I will fight under you then. I am convinced, as far as passion will permit.

[LADY PLYANT and SIR PAUL come up to MELLEFONT.]

Lady Plyant. Inhuman and treacherous——

Sir Paul. Thou serpent and first tempter of womankind.

Cynth. Bless me! Sir, madam, what mean you?

Sir Paul. Thy, Thy, come away, Thy. Touch him not. Come hither, girl. Go not near him, there's nothing but deceit about him. Snakes are in his peruke, and the crocodile of Nilus is in his belly. He will eat thee up alive.

Lady Plyant. Dishonourable, impudent creature!

Mel. For Heaven's sake, madam, to whom do you direct this language?

Lady Plyant. Have I behaved myself with all the decorum and nicety befitting the person of Sir Paul's wife? Have I preserved my honour as it were in a snow-house for these three years past? Have I been white and unsullied even by Sir Paul himself?

Sir Paul. Nay, she has been an invincible wife, even to me, that's the truth on 't.

Lady Plyant. Have I, I say, preserved myself, like a fair sheet of paper, for you to make a blot upon?

Sir Paul. And she shall make a simile with any woman in England.

Mel. I am so amazed I know not what to say.

Sir Paul. Do you think my daughter, this pretty creature—gadsbud, she's a wife for a cherubim—do you think her fit for nothing but to be a stalking-horse to stand before you, while you take aim at my wife. Gadsbud, I was never angry before in my life, and I'll never be appeased again.

Mel. [*aside*]. Hell and damnation! This is my aunt; such malice can be engendered nowhere else.

Lady Plyant. Sir Paul, take Cynthia from his sight. Leave me to strike him with the remorse of his intended crime.

Cynth. Pray, sir, stay, hear him. I dare affirm he's innocent.

Sir Paul. Innocent! Why harkee, come hither, Thy.

Hark'ee, I had it from his aunt, my sister Touchwood. Gadsbud, he does not care a farthing for anything of thee, but thy portion. Why, he's in love with my wife. He would have tantalised thee, and made a cuckold of thy poor father. And that would certainly have broke my heart. I'm sure if ever I should have horns, they would kill me. They would never come kindly. I should die of 'em, like a child that was cutting his teeth, I should indeed, Thy. Therefore come away. But Providence has prevented all, therefore come away when I bid you.

Cynth. I must obey. [*Exit SIR PAUL and CYNTHIA.*]

Lady Plyant. Oh, such a thing! The impiety of it startles me. To wrong so good, so fair a creature, and one that loves you tenderly. 'Tis a barbarity of barbarities, and nothing could be guilty of it——

Mel. But the greatest villain imagination can form, I grant it. And next to the villainy of such a fact is the villainy of aspersing me with the guilt. How, which way was I to wrong her? For yet I understand you not.

Lady Plyant. Why, gads my life, Cousin Mellefont, you cannot be so peremptory as to deny it, when I tax you with it to your face. For now Sir Paul's gone, you are *corum nobis*.

Mel. By Heaven, I love her more than life, or——

Lady Plyant. Fiddle, faddle. Don't tell me of this and that, and everything in the world, but give me mathematical demonstration. Answer me directly. But I have not patience. Oh! the impiety of it, as I was saying, and the unparalleled wickedness! Oh, merciful Father! How could you think to reverse Nature so, to make the daughter the means of procuring the mother?

Mel. The daughter to procure the mother!

Lady Plyant. Aye, for though I am not Cynthia's own mother, I am her father's wife, and that's near enough to make it incest.

Mel. [*aside*]. Incest! Oh, my precious aunt, and the devil in conjunction.

Lady Plyant. Oh, reflect upon the horror of that, and then the guilt of deceiving everybody! Marrying the daughter, only to make a cuckold of the father! And then seducing me, debauching my purity, and perverting me from the road of virtue, in which I have trod thus long and never made one trip, not one *faux pas*! Oh, consider it. What would you have to answer for, if you should provoke me to frailty? Alas! humanity is feeble, Heaven knows! very feeble, and unable to support itself.

Mel. Where am I? Is it day, and am I awake? Madam——

Lady Plyant. And nobody knows how circumstances may happen together. To my thinking, now, I could resist the strongest temptation. But yet I know 'tis impossible for me to know whether I could or not. There's no certainty in the things of this life.

Mel. Madam, pray give me leave to ask you one question.

Lady Plyant. Oh, Lord, ask me the question! I'll swear I'll refuse it, I swear I'll deny it. Therefore don't ask me, nay, you shan't ask me. I swear I'll deny it. Oh, gemini, you have brought all the blood into my face. I warrant I am as red as a turkey-cock. Oh fie, Cousin Mellefont!

Mel. Nay, madam, hear me. I mean——

Lady Plyant. Hear you? No, no, I'll deny you first, and hear you afterwards. For one does not know how one's mind may change upon hearing. Hearing is one of the senses, and all the senses are fallible. I won't trust my honour, I assure you. My honour is infallible and uncome-at-able.

Mel. For Heaven's sake, madam——

Lady Plyant. Oh, name it no more. Bless me, how can

you talk of Heaven and have so much wickedness in your heart? Maybe you don't think it a sin. They say some of you gentlemen don't think it a sin. Maybe it is no sin to them that don't think it so. Indeed, if I did not think it a sin. But still, my honour, if it were no sin! But then, to marry my daughter for the conveniency of frequent opportunities! I'll never consent to that. As sure as can be, I'll break the match.

Mel. Death and amazement! Madam, upon my knees——

Lady Plyant. Nay, nay, rise up. Come, you shall see my good nature. I know love is powerful, and nobody can help his passion. 'Tis not your fault, nor I swear it is not mine. How can I help it if I have charms? And how can you help it if you are made a captive? I swear it is pity it should be a fault. But my honour! Well, but your honour too! But the sin! Well, but the necessity! Oh Lord, here's somebody coming. I dare not stay. Well, you must consider of your crime, and strive as much as can be against it. Strive be sure. But don't be melancholy, don't despair. But never think that I'll grant you anything! Oh Lord, no. But be sure you lay aside all thoughts of the marriage, for though I know you don't love Cynthia, only as a blind for your passion to me, yet it will make me jealous. Oh Lord, what did I say? Jealous! No, no, I can't be jealous, for I must not love you. Therefore don't hope, but don't despair neither. Oh, they're coming. I must fly. [*Exit.*]

Mel. (*after a pause*). So then, spite of my care and foresight, I am caught, caught in my security. Yet this was but a shallow artifice, unworthy of my Machiavelian aunt. There must be more behind, this is but the first flash, the priming of her engine. Destruction follows hard, if not most presently prevented.

Enter MASKWELL.

Mel. Maskwell, welcome! Thy presence is a view of land appearing to my shipwrecked hopes. The witch has raised the storm and her ministers have done their work. You see the vessels are parted.

Mask. I know it: I met Sir Paul towing away Cynthia. Come, trouble not your head. I'll join you together ere to-morrow morning, or drown between you in the attempt.

Mel. There's comfort in a hand stretched out to one that's sinking, though never so far off.

Mask. No sinking, nor no danger! Come, cheer up. Why you don't know that while I plead for you your aunt has given me a retaining fee. Nay, I am your greatest enemy, and she does but journey-work under me.

Mel. Ha! How's this?

Mask. What d'ye think of my being employed in the execution of all her plots? Ha, ha, ha! by Heaven it's true. I have undertaken to break the match, I have undertaken to make your uncle disinherit you, to get you turned out of doors, and to—— ha, ha, ha! I can't tell you for laughing. Oh, she has opened her heart to me. I am to turn you a-grazing, and to—— ha, ha, ha! marry Cynthia myself. There's a plot for you.

Mel. Ha! Oh see, I see my rising sun. Light breaks through clouds upon me, and I shall live in day. Oh, my Maskwell! how shall I thank or praise thee? Thou hast outwitted woman. But tell me, how could'st thou thus get into her confidence? Ha, how? But was it her contrivance to persuade my Lady Plyant to this extravagant belief?

Mask. It was, and to tell you the truth, I encouraged it for your diversion. Though it made you a little uneasy for the present, yet the reflection of it must needs be entertaining. I warrant she was very violent at first.

Mel. Ha, ha, ha! aye, a very fury. But I was most afraid of her violence at last. If you had not come as you did, I don't know what she might have attempted.

Mask. Ha, ha, ha! I know her temper. Well, you must know then that all my contrivances were but bubbles, till at last I pretended to have been long secretly in love with Cynthia. That did my business. That convinced your aunt I might be trusted, since it was as much my interest as hers to break the match. Then she thought my jealousy might qualify me to assist her in her revenge. And, in short, in that belief told me the secrets of her heart. At length we made this agreement. If I accomplish her designs, as I told you before, she has engaged to put Cynthia with all her fortune into my power.

Mel. She is most gracious in her favour. Well, and dear Jack, how hast thou contrived?

Mask. I would not have you stay to hear it now, for I don't know but she may come this way. I am to meet her anon. After that, I'll tell you the whole matter. Be here in this gallery an hour hence; by that time I imagine our consultation may be over.

Mel. I will. Till then success attend thee. [*Exit.*]

Mask. Till then success will attend me, for when I meet you I meet the only obstacle to my fortune. Cynthia, let thy beauty gild my crimes, and whatsoever I commit of treachery or deceit shall be imputed to me as a merit. Treachery, what treachery? Love cancels all the bonds of friendship, and sets men right upon their first foundations.

Duty to kings, piety to parents, gratitude to benefactors, and fidelity to friends are different and particular ties; but the name of rival cuts 'em all asunder, and is a general acquittance. Rival is equal, and love like death an universal leveller of mankind. Ha! But is there not such a thing as honesty? Yes, and whosoever has it about him bears an

enemy in his breast. For your honest man, as I take it, is that nice, scrupulous, conscientious person who will cheat nobody but himself, such another coxcomb as your wise man, who is too hard for all the world, and will be made a fool of by nobody but himself. Ha, ha, ha! Well, for wisdom and honesty give me cunning and hypocrisy. Oh, 'tis such a pleasure to angle for fair-faced fools! Then that hungry gudgeon, credulity, will bite at anything. Why, let me see, I have the same face, the same words and accents, when I speak what I do think, and when I speak what I do not think. The very same. And dear dissimulation is the only art not to be known from Nature.

Why will mankind be fools and be deceived?
And why are friends' and lovers' oaths believed?
When each, who searches strictly his own mind,
May so much fraud and power of baseness find.

[*Exit.*]

ACT III

Scene I—*A Gallery in the LORD TOUCHWOOD's House.*

Enter LORD TOUCHWOOD and LADY TOUCHWOOD.

Lady Touch. My lord, can you blame my brother Plyant, if he refuse his daughter upon this provocation? The contract's void by this unheard-of impiety.

Lord Touch. I don't believe it true. He has better principles. Pooh! 'tis nonsense. Come, come, I know my Lady Plyant has a large eye, and would centre everything in her own circle. 'Tis not the first time she has mistaken respect for love, and made Sir Paul jealous of the civility of an undesigning person, the better to bespeak his security in her unfeigned pleasures.

Lady Touch. You censure hardly; my lord. My sister's honour is very well known.

Lord Touch. Yes, I believe I know some that have been familiarly acquainted with it. This is a little trick wrought by some pitiful contriver, envious of my nephew's merit.

Lady Touch. Nay, my lord, it may be so, and I hope it will be found so. But that will require some time, for in such a case as this demonstration is necessary.

Lord Touch. There should have been demonstration of the contrary too, before it had been believed.

Lady Touch. So I suppose there was.

Lord Touch. How? Where? When?

Lady Touch. That I can't tell. Nay, I don't say there was. I am willing to believe as favourably of my nephew as I can.

Lord Touch. [*half aside*]. I don't know that.

Lady Touch. How? Don't you believe that, say you, my lord?

Lord Touch. No, I don't say so. I confess I am troubled to find you so cold in his defence.

Lady Touch. His defence! Bless me, would you have me defend an ill thing?

Lord Touch. You believe it then?

Lady Touch. I don't know. I am very unwilling to speak my thoughts in anything that may be to my cousin's disadvantage. Besides, I find, my lord, you are prepared to receive an ill impression from any opinion of mine which is not consenting with your own. But since I am like to be suspected in the end, and 'tis a pain any longer to dissemble, I own it to you. In short, I do believe it, nay, and can believe anything worse, if it were laid to his charge. Don't ask me my reasons, my lord, for they are not fit to be told you.

Lord Touch. [*aside*]. I'm amazed. Here must be something more than ordinary in this. [*Aloud.*] Not fit to be told me, madam? You can have no interests wherein I am not concerned, and consequently the same reasons ought

to be convincing to me, which create your satisfaction or disquiet.

Lady Touch. But those which cause my disquiet I am willing to have remote from your hearing. Good my lord, don't press me.

Lord Touch. Don't oblige me to press you.

Lady Touch. Whatever it was, 'tis past. And that is better to be unknown which cannot be prevented. Therefore let me beg you to rest satisfied.

Lord Touch. When you have told me, I will——

Lady Touch. You won't.

Lord Touch. By my life, my dear, I will.

Lady Touch. What if you can't?

Lord Touch. How? Then I must know; nay, I will. No more trifling! I charge you tell me, by all our mutual peace to come, upon your duty——

Lady Touch. Nay, my lord, you need say no more to make me lay my heart before you. But don't be thus transported, compose yourself. It is not of concern to make you lose one minute's temper. 'Tis not indeed, my dear. Nay, by this kiss you shan't be angry. Oh Lord, I wish I had not told you anything. Indeed, my lord, you have frightened me. Nay, look pleased, I'll tell you.

Lord Touch. Well, well.

Lady Touch. Nay, but will you be calm? Indeed, it's nothing but——

Lord Touch. But what?

Lady Touch. But will you promise me not to be angry? Nay, you must. Not to be angry with Mellefont. I dare swear he's sorry, and were it to do again, would not——

Lord Touch. Sorry, for what? 'Death, you rack me with delay.

Lady Touch. Nay, no great matter, only——. Well, I have your promise. Pooh! why nothing, only your

nephew had a mind to amuse himself sometimes with a little gallantry towards me. Nay, I can't think he meant anything seriously, but methought it looked oddly.

Lord Touch. Confusion and hell, what do I hear?

Lady Touch. Or maybe he thought he was not enough akin to me upon your account, and had a mind to create a nearer relation on his own. A lover you know, my lord. Ha, ha, ha! Well, but that's all. Now you have it. Well, remember your promise, my lord, and don't take any notice of it to him.

Lord Touch. No, no, no. Damnation!

Lady Touch. Nay, I swear you must not. A little harmless mirth, only misplaced, that's all. But if it were more, 'tis over now, and all's well. For my part I have forgot it, and so has he, I hope, for I have not heard anything from him these two days.

Lord Touch. These two days! Is it so fresh? Unnatural villain! 'Death, I'll have him stripped and turned naked out of my doors this moment, and let him rot and perish, incestuous brute!

Lady Touch. Oh, for Heaven's sake, my lord! You'll ruin me if you take such public notice of it. It will be a town-talk. Consider your own and my honour. Nay, I told you you would not be satisfied when you knew it.

Lord Touch. Before I've done I will be satisfied. Ungrateful monster, how long?

Lady Touch. Lord, I don't know. I wish my lips had grown together when I told you. Almost a twelvemonth. Nay, I won't tell you any more till you are yourself. Pray, my lord, don't let the company see you in this disorder. Yet, I confess, I can't blame you, for I think I was never so surprised in my life. Who would have thought my nephew could have so misconstrued my kindness? But will you go into your closet and recover your temper? I'll

make an excuse of sudden business to the company and come to you. Pray good dear, my lord, let me beg you do now. I'll come immediately and tell you all. Will you, my lord?

Lord Touch. I will. I am mute with wonder.

Lady Touch. Well, but go now. Here's somebody coming.

Lord Touch. Well, I go. You won't stay, for I would hear more of this. [Exit LORD TOUCHWOOD.

Lady Touch. I follow instantly. So.

Enter MASKWELL.

Mask. This was a masterpiece, and did not need my help, though I stood ready for a cue to come in and confirm all, had there been occasion.

Lady Touch. Have you seen Mellefont?

Mask. I have, and am to meet him here about this time.

Lady Touch. How does he bear his disappointment?

Mask. Secure in my assistance, he seemed not much afflicted, but rather laughed at the shallow artifice, which so little time must of necessity discover. Yet he is apprehensive of some farther design of yours and has engaged me to watch you. I believe he will hardly be able to prevent your plot. Yet I would have you use caution and expedition.

Lady Touch. Expedition indeed! For all we do must be performed in the remaining part of this evening, and before the company break up, lest my lord should cool and have an opportunity to talk with him privately. My lord must not see him again.

Mask. By no means. Therefore you must aggravate my lord's displeasure to a degree that will admit of no conference with him. What think you of mentioning me?

Lady Touch. How?

Mask. To my lord, as having been privy to Mellefont's

design upon you, but still using my utmost endeavours to dissuade him, though my friendship and love to him has made me conceal it. Yet you may say I threatened the next time he attempted anything of that kind to discover it to my lord.

Lady Touch. To what end is this?

Mask. It will confirm my lord's opinion of my honour and honesty, and create in him a new confidence in me, which, should this design miscarry, will be necessary to the forming another plot that I have in my head—[*aside*] to cheat you as well as the rest.

Lady Touch. I'll do it. I'll tell him you hindered him once from forcing me.

Mask. Excellent! You ladyship has a most improving fancy. You had best go to my lord, keep him as long as you can in his closet, and I doubt not but you will mould him to what you please. Your guests are so engaged in their own follies and intrigues they'll miss neither of you.

Lady Touch. When shall we meet? At eight this evening in my chamber. There rejoice at our success and toy away an hour in mirth!

Mask. I will not fail. [*Exit LADY TOUCHWOOD.*] I know what she means by toying away an hour well enough. Pox, I have lost all appetite to her. Yet she's a fine woman, and I loved her once. But I don't know, since I have been in a great measure kept by her, the case is altered. What was my pleasure is become my duty, and I have as little stomach to her now as if I were her husband. Should she smoke my design upon Cynthia, I were in a fine pickle. She has a damned penetrating head, and knows how to interpret a coldness the right way, therefore I must dissemble ardour and ecstasy. That's resolved. How easily and pleasantly is that dissembled before fruition! Pox on 't, that a man can't drink without quenching his thirst! Ha!

yonder comes Mellefont, thoughtful. Let me think. Meet her at eight. Hum! Ha! By Heaven, I have it! If I can speak to my lord before. Was it my brain or Providence? No matter which, I will deceive 'em all, and yet secure myself. 'Twas a lucky thought. Well, this double-dealing is a jewel. Here he comes now for me.

[MASKWELL, *pretending not to see him, walks by him, and speaks as if were to himself.*

Enter MELLEFONT, musing.

Mask. Mercy on us, what will the wickedness of this world come to?

Mel. How now, Jack? What, so full of contemplation that you run over?

Mask. I'm glad you're come, for I could not contain myself any longer, and was just going to give vent to a secret which nobody but you ought to drink down. Your aunt's just gone from hence.

Mel. And having trusted thee with the secrets of her soul, thou art villainously bent to discover 'em all to me, ha?

Mask. I'm afraid my frailty leans that way. But I don't know whether I can in honour discover 'em all.

Mel. All, all, man. What, you may in honour betray her as far as she betrays herself. No tragical design upon my person, I hope.

Mask. No, but it's a comical design upon mine.

Mel. What dost thou mean?

Mask. Listen, and be dumb. We have been bargaining about the rate of your ruin.

Mel. Like any two guardians to an orphan heiress. Well?

Mask. And whereas pleasure is generally paid with mischief, what mischief I do is to be paid with pleasure.

Mel. So, when you've swallowed the potion, you sweeten your mouth with a plum.

Mask. You are merry, sir, but I shall probe your constitution. In short, the price of your banishment is to be paid with the person of——

Mel. Of Cynthia, and her fortune. Why, you forget you told me this before.

Mask. No, no. So far you are right, and I am, as an earnest of that bargain, to have full and free possession of the person of—your aunt.

Mel. Ha! Pooh! you trifle.

Mask. By this light, I'm serious, all raillery apart. I knew 'twould stun you. This evening at eight she will receive me in her bed-chamber.

Mel. Hell and the devil! Is she abandoned of all grace? Why the woman is possessed.

Mask. Well, will you go in my stead?

Mel. By Heaven, into a hot furnace sooner.

Mask. No, you would not. It would not be so convenient, as I can order matters.

Mel. What do you mean?

Mask. Mean? Not to disappoint the lady, I assure you. Ha, ha, ha! how gravely he looks. Come, come, I won't perplex you. 'Tis the only thing that providence could have contrived to make me capable of serving you, either to my inclination or your own necessity.

Mel. How, how, for Heaven's sake, dear Maskwell?

Mask. Why thus. I'll go according to appointment. You shall have notice at the critical minute to come and surprise your aunt and me together. Counterfeit a rage against me, and I'll make my escape through the private passage from her chamber, which I'll take care to leave open. 'Twill be hard if then you can't bring her to any conditions, for this discovery will disarm her of all defence, and leave her entirely at your mercy. Nay, she must ever after be in awe of you.

Mel. Let me adore thee, my better genius! By Heaven, I think it is not in the power of fate to disappoint my hopes. My hopes? My certainty.

Mask. Well, I'll meet you here within a quarter of eight and give you notice.

Mel. Good fortune ever go along with thee.

[*Exit MAXWELL.*]

Enter to him CARELESS.

Care. Mellefont, get out o' th' way. My Lady Plyant's coming, and I shall never succeed while thou art in sight—though she begins to tack about. But I made love a great while to no purpose.

Mel. Why, what's the matter? She's convinced that I don't care for her.

Care. I can't get an answer from her that does not begin with her honour, or her virtue, her religion, or some such cant. Then she has told me the whole history of Sir Paul's nine years' courtship. How he has lain for whole nights together upon the stairs before her chamber-door, and that the first favour he received from her was a piece of an old scarlet petticoat for a stomacher, which since the day of his marriage he has, out of a piece of gallantry, converted into a nightcap, and wears it still with much solemnity on his anniversary wedding-night.

Mel. That I have seen, with the ceremony thereunto belonging. For on that night he creeps in at the bed's feet like a gulled Bassa* that has married a relation of the Grand Signior, and that night he has his arms at liberty. Did not she tell you at what a distance she keeps him? He has confessed to me that but at some certain times, that is I suppose when she apprehends being with child, he never has the privilege of using the familiarity of a husband with a wife. He was once given to scrambling with his hands

* Pasha.

and sprawling in his sleep, and ever since she has him swaddled up in blankets, and his hands and feet swathed down, and so put to bed, and there he lies with a great beard, like a Russian bear upon a drift of snow. You are very great with him. I wonder he never told you his grievances. He will, I warrant you.

Care. Excessively foolish! But that which gives me most hopes of her is her telling me of the many temptations she has resisted.

Mel. Nay, then you have her. For a woman's bragging to a man that she has overcome temptations is an argument that they were weakly offered, and a challenge to him to engage her more irresistibly. 'Tis only an enhancing the price of the commodity by telling you how many customers have underbid her.

Care. Nay, I don't despair. But still, she has a grudging to you. I talked to her tother night at my Lord Froth's masquerade, when I'm satisfied she knew me, and I had no reason to complain of my reception. But I find women are not the same barefaced and in masks, and a vizor disguises their inclinations as much as their faces.

Mel. 'Tis a mistake. For women may most properly be said to be unmasked when they wear vizors. For that secures them from blushing and being out of countenance, and next to being in the dark, or alone, they are most truly themselves in a vizor mask. Here they come! I'll leave you. Ply her close, and by and by clap a *billet doux* into her hand. For a woman never thinks a man truly in love with her till he has been fool enough to think of her out of her sight, and to lose so much time as to write to her. [*Exit.*

Enter SIR PAUL and LADY PLYANT.

Sir Paul. Shan't we disturb your meditation, Mr. Careless. You would be private?

Care. You bring that along with you, Sir Paul, that shall be always welcome to my privacy.

Sir Paul. Oh, sweet sir, you load your humble servants, both me and my wife, with continual favours.

Lady Plyant. Sir Paul, what a phrase was there! You will be making answers, and taking that upon you which ought to lie upon me. That you should have so little breeding to think Mr. Careless did not apply himself to me! Pray, what have you to entertain anybody's privacy? I swear and declare in the face of the world I'm ready to blush for your ignorance.

Sir Paul [*aside to her*]. I acquiesce, my lady; but don't snub so loud.

Lady Plyant. Mr. Careless, if a person that is wholly illiterate might be supposed to be capable of being qualified to make a suitable return to those obligations which you are pleased to confer upon one that is wholly incapable of being qualified in all those circumstances, I'm sure I should rather attempt it than anything in the world. [*Curtsies.*] For I'm sure there's nothing in the world that I would rather. [*Curtsies.*] But I know Mr. Careless is so great a critic and so fine a gentleman, that it is impossible for me——

Care. Oh heavens! Madam, you confound me.

Sir Paul. Gadsbud, she's a fine person.

Lady Plyant. Oh Lord! Sir, pardon me, we women have not those advantages. I know my own imperfections. But at the same time you must give me leave to declare in the face of the world that nobody is more sensible of favours and things. For with the reserve of my honour, I assure you, Mr. Careless, I don't know anything in the world I would refuse to a person so meritorious. You'll pardon my want of expression.

Care. Oh, your ladyship is abounding in all excellence, particularly that of phrase.

Lady Plyant. You are so obliging, sir.

Care. Your ladyship is so charming.

Sir Paul. So. Now, now. Now, my lady.

Lady Plyant. So well bred.

Care. So surprising.

Lady Plyant. So well dressed, so *bonne mine*, so eloquent, so unaffected, so easy, so free, so particular, so agreeable——

Sir Paul. Aye, so, so. There.

Care. Oh Lord, I beseech you, madam, don't——

Lady Plyant. So gay, so graceful, so good teeth, so fine shape, so fine limbs, so fine linen, and I don't doubt but you have a very good skin, sir.

Care. For Heaven's sake, madam! I'm quite out of countenance.

Sir Paul. And my lady's quite out of breath, or else you should hear. Gadsbud, you may talk of my Lady Froth!

Care. Oh fie, fie, not to be named of a day. My Lady Froth is very well in her accomplishments; but it is when my Lady Plyant is not thought of, if that can ever be.

Lady Plyant. Oh, you overcome me. That is so excessive.

Sir Paul. Nay, I swear and vow that was pretty.

Care. Oh, Sir Paul, you are the happiest man alive. Such a lady, that is the envy of her own sex and the admiration of ours!

Sir Paul. Your humble servant. I am, I thank Heaven, in a fine way of living, as I may say, peacefully and happily, and I think need not envy any of my neighbours, blessed be Providence. Aye, truly, Mr. Careless, my lady is a great blessing, a fine, discreet, well-spoken woman as you shall see, if it becomes me to say so, and we live very comfortably together. She is a little hasty sometimes, and

so am I; but mine's soon over, and then I'm so sorry. Oh, Mr. Careless, if it were not for one thing——

Enter BOY with a Letter, carries it to SIR PAUL.

Lady Plyant [to BOY]. How often have you been told of that, you jackanapes?

Sir Paul. Gad so, gadsbud. Tim, carry it to my lady; you should have carried it to my lady first.

Boy. 'Tis directed to your worship.

Sir Paul. Well, well, my lady reads all letters first. Child, do so no more. D'ye hear, Tim?

Boy. No, and please you.

[*Carries the letter to my lady and exit.*]

Sir Paul [to CARELESS]. A humour of my wife's. You know women have little fancies. But as I was telling you, Mr. Careless, if it were not for one thing I should think myself the happiest man in the world. Indeed that touches me near, very near.

Care. What can that be, Sir Paul?

Sir Paul. Why I have, I thank Heaven, a very plentiful fortune, a good estate in the country, some houses in town, and some money, a pretty tolerable personal estate, and it is a great grief to me, indeed it is, Mr. Careless, that I have not a son to inherit this. 'Tis true, I have a daughter, and a fine dutiful child she is, though I say it. Blessed be Providence I may say, for indeed, Mr. Careless, I am mightily beholden to Providence, a poor unworthy sinner. But if I had a son! Ah! that's my affliction, and my only affliction. Indeed I cannot refrain tears when it comes in my mind.

[*Cries.*]

Care. Why, methinks that might be easily remedied. My lady's a fine likely woman.

Sir Paul. Oh, a fine likely woman as you shall see in a summer's day. Indeed she is, Mr. Careless, in all respects.

Care. And I should not have taken you to have been so old——

Sir Paul. Alas! that's not it, Mr. Careless. Ah! that's not it. No, no, you shoot wide of the mark a mile, indeed you do. That's not it, Mr. Careless. No, no, that's not it.

Care. No? What can be the matter then?

Sir Paul. You'll scarcely believe me, when I shall tell you. My lady is so nice. It's very strange, but it's true, too true. She's so very nice that I don't believe she would touch a man for the world, at least not above once a year. I'm sure I have found it so, and alas! what's once a year to an old man, who would do good in his generation? Indeed it's true, Mr. Careless. It breaks my heart. I am her husband, as I may say, though far unworthy of that honour, yet I am her husband; but, alas-a-day, I have no more familiarity with her person, as to that matter, than with my own mother. No, indeed.

Care. Alas-a-day, this is a lamentable story. My lady must be told on't. She must, i'faith, Sir Paul. 'Tis an injury to the world.

Sir Paul. Ah! would to Heaven you would, Mr. Careless! You are mightily in her favour.

Care. I warrant you! What, we must have a son some way or other.

Sir Paul. Indeed, I should be mightily bound to you, if you could bring it about, Mr. Careless.

Lady Plyant. Here, Sir Paul, it's from your steward. Here's a return of six hundred pounds. You may take fifty of it for the next half-year. [*Gives him the letter.*]

Enter LORD FROTH and CYNTHIA.

Sir Paul. How does my girl? Come hither to thy father, poor lamb. Thou'rt melancholick.

Lord Froth. Heaven, Sir Paul, you amaze me, of all

things in the world. You are never pleased but when we are all upon the broad grin, all laugh and no company. Ah! then 'tis such a sight to see some teeth! Sure you're a great admirer of my Lady Whifler, Mr. Sneer, and Sir Lawrence Loud, and that gang?

Sir Paul. I vow and swear she's a very merry woman, but I think she laughs a little too much.

Lord Froth. Merry! Oh Lord, what a character that is of a woman of quality! You have been at my Lady Whifler's upon her day, madam?

Cynth. Yes, my lord. [*Aside.*] I must humour this fool.

Lord Froth. Well, and how, eh? What is your sense of the conversation?

Cynth. Oh, most ridiculous, a perpetual concert of laughing without any harmony. For sure, my lord, to laugh out of time is as disagreeable as to sing out of time or out of tune.

Lord Froth. He, he, he! right. And then, my Lady Whifler is so ready; she always comes in three bars too soon. And then, what do they laugh at? For you know laughing without a jest is as impertinent, he! as, as——

Cynth. As dancing without a fiddle.

Lord Froth. Just, i'faith. That was at my tongue's end.

Cynth. But that cannot be properly said of them, for I think they are all in good nature with the world, and only laugh at one another, and you must allow they have all jests in their persons, though they have none in their conversation.

Lord Froth. True, as I'm a person of honour. For Heaven's sake, let us sacrifice 'em to mirth a little.

[*Enter BOY and whispers to SIR PAUL.*]

Sir Paul. Gad, so. Wife, wife, my Lady Plyant, I have a word.

Lady Plyant. I'm busy, Sir Paul. I wonder at your impertinence.

Care. [*aside to SIR PAUL*]. Sir Paul, harkee. I'm reasoning the matter you know. [*Aloud.*] Madam, if your ladyship please, we'll discourse of this in the next room.

[*Exeunt CARELESS and LADY PLYANT.*]

Sir Paul. Oho, I wish you good success, I wish you good success. Boy, tell my lady, when she has done, I would speak with her below. [*Exit SIR PAUL.*]

Enter LADY FROTH and BRISK.

Lady Froth. Then you think that episode between Susan, the dairymaid, and our coachman is not amiss? You know, I may suppose the dairy in town as well as in the country.

Brisk. Incomparable, let me perish. But then, being an heroic poem, had not you better call him a charioteer? Charioteer sounds great. Besides your ladyship's coachman having a red face, and you comparing him to the sun, and you know the sun is called Heaven's charioteer.

Lady Froth. Oh, infinitely better. I'm extremely beholden to you for the hint. Stay, we'll read over those half a score lines again. [*Pulls out a paper.*] Let me see here. You know what goes before? The comparison, you know.

[*Reads.*] For as the sun shines every day,
So of our coachman I may say.

Brisk. I'm afraid that simile won't do in wet weather. Because you say the sun shines every day.

Lady Froth. No, for the sun it won't, but it will do for the coachman. For you know there's most occasion for a coach in wet weather.

Brisk. Right, right, that saves all.

Lady Froth. Then I don't say the sun shines all the day,

but that he peeps now and then. Yet he does shine all the day too, you know, though we don't see him.

Brisk. Right, but the vulgar will never comprehend that.

Lady Froth. Well, you shall hear. Let me see.

[*Reads.*] For as the sun shines every day,
So, of our coachman I may say,
He shows his drunken fiery face,
Just as the sun does, more or less.

Brisk. That's right, all's well, all's well. "More or less."

[*LADY FROTH reads.*]

And when at night his labour's done,
Then too, like Heaven's charioteer, the sun,
Aye, charioteer does better.

Into the dairy he descends
And there his whipping and his driving ends;
There he's secure from danger of a bilk,*
His fare is paid him, and he sets in milk.

For Susan, you know, is Thetis, and so——

Brisk. Incomparable well and proper, egad! But I have one exception to make. Don't you think bilk, I know it's good rhyme, but don't you think bilk and fare too like a hackney coachman?

Lady Froth. I swear and vow I'm afraid so. And yet our Jehu was a hackney coachman, when my lord took him.

Brisk. Was he? I'm answered, if Jehu was a hackney coachman. You may put that in the marginal notes though to prevent criticism. Only mark it with a small asterism and say, "Jehu was formerly a hackney coachman."

Lady Froth. I will: you'd oblige me extremely to write notes to the whole poem.

Brisk. With all my heart and soul, and proud of the vast honour, let me perish.

* To *bilk* was to go off without paying.

Lord Froth. He, he, he! My dear, have you done? Won't you join with us? We were laughing at my Lady Whifler and Mr. Sneer.

Lady Froth. Aye, my dear, were you? Oh, filthy Mr. Sneer! He's a nauseous figure, a most fulsamick* fop, foh! He spent two days together in going about Covent Garden to suit the lining of his coach with his complexion.

Lord Froth. Oh, silly! Yet his aunt is as fond of him as if she had brought the ape into the world herself.

Brisk. Who, my Lady Toothless? Oh, she's a mortifying spectacle; she's always chewing the cud, like an old ewe.

Cynth. Fie, Mr. Brisk, eringo's† for her cough.

Lady Froth. I have seen her take 'em half chewed out of her mouth to laugh, and then put 'em in again. Foh!

Lord Froth. Foh!

Lady Froth. Then she's always ready to laugh when Sneer offers to speak, and sits in expectation of his no-jest, with her gums bare and her mouth open——

Brisk. Like an oyster at low ebb, egad! Ha, ha, ha!

Cynth. [*aside*]. Well, I find there are no fools so considerable in themselves, but they can render other people contemptible by exposing their infirmities.

Lady Froth. Then that tother great strapping lady, I can't hit of her name, the old fat fool that paints so exorbitantly.

Brisk. I know whom you mean, but deuce take me I can't hit of her name neither. Paints, d'ye say? Why, she lays it on with a trowel. Then she has a great beard that bristles through it, and makes her look as if she were plastered with lime and hair, let me perish.

Lady Froth. Oh, you made a song upon her, Mr. Brisk.

Brisk. Eh? Egad! so I did. My lord can sing it.

* Fulsome.

† The candied root of the sea-holly, a popular aphrodisiac.

Cynth. Oh, good my lord, let's hear it.

Brisk. 'Tis not a song neither, it's a sort of an epigram, or rather an epigrammatic sonnet. I don't know what to call it, but it's satire. Sing it, my lord.

Lord Froth [*sings*].

Ancient Phillis has young graces.

'Tis a strange thing, but a true one.

Shall I tell you how?

She herself makes her own faces,

And each morning wears a new one.

Where's the wonder now?

Brisk. Short, but there's salt in 't. My way of writing, egad!

Enter FOOTMAN.

Lady Froth. How now?

Foot. Your ladyship's chair is come.

Lady Froth. Is nurse and the child in it?

Foot. Yes, madam.

Lady Froth. Oh, the dear creature! Let's go see it.

Lord Froth. I swear, my dear, you'll spoil that child with sending it to and again so often. This is the seventh time the chair has gone for her to-day.

Lady Froth. Oh law, I swear it's but the sixth, and I haven't seen her these two hours, the poor dear creature. I swear, my lord, you don't love poor little Sappho. Come, my dear Cynthia, Mr. Brisk, we'll go see Sappho, though my lord won't.

Cynth. I'll wait upon your ladyship.

Brisk. Pray, madam, how old is Lady Sappho?

Lady Froth. Three quarters, but I swear she has a world of wit, and can sing a tune already. My lord, won't you go? Won't you? What, not to see Sapph? Pray, my lord, come see little Sapph. I knew you could not stay.

[*Exeunt all but* CYNTHIA.

Cynth. 'Tis not so hard to counterfeit joy in the depth of affliction, as to dissemble mirth in company of fools. Why should I call 'em fools? The world thinks better of 'em. For these have quality and education, wit and fine conversation, are received and admired by the world. If not, they like and admire themselves. And why is not that true wisdom, for 'tis happiness, and for aught I know we have misapplied the name all this while, and mistaken the thing, since

If happiness in self-content is placed,
The wise are wretched, and fools only blessed.

[*Exit.*

ACT IV

Scene I—*A Gallery in the LORD TOUCHWOOD'S House.*

Enter MELLEFONT and CYNTHIA.

Cynth. I heard him loud as I came by the closet-door, and my lady with him, but she seemed to moderate his passion.

Mel. Aye, hell thank her, as gentle breezes moderate a fire, but I shall counter-work her spells and ride the witch in her own bridle.*

Cynth. It's impossible. She'll cast beyond you still. I'll lay my life it will never be a match.

Mel. What?

Cynth. Between you and me.

Mel. Why so?

Cynth. My mind gives me it won't, because we are both willing. We each of us strive to reach the goal, and hinder one another in the race. I swear it never does well when the parties are so agreed. For when people walk hand in hand, there's neither overtaking nor meeting. We hunt in

* Throwing a bridle over the victim's head was an accepted method of enchantment.

couples where we both pursue the same game, but forget one another, and 'tis because we are so near that we don't think of coming together.

Mel. Hum, gad, I believe there's something in 't. Marriage is the game that we hunt, and while we think that we only have it in view, I don't see but we have it in our power.

Cynth. Within reach. For example, give me your hand. You have looked through the wrong end of the perspective all this while, for nothing has been between us but our fears.

Mel. I don't know why we should not steal out of the house this very moment and marry one another without consideration or the fear of repentance. Pox o' fortune, portion, settlements and jointures.

Cynth. Aye, aye, what have we to do with 'em? You know we marry for love.

Mel. Love, love, downright, very villainous love.

Cynth. And he that can't live upon love deserves to die in a ditch. Here, then, I give you my promise, in spite of duty any temptation of wealth, your inconstancy, or my own inclination to change——

Mel. To run most wilfully and unreasonably away with me this moment, and be married.

Cynth. Hold. Never to marry anybody else.

Mel. That's but a kind of negative consent. Why, you won't baulk the frolic?

Cynth. If you had not been so assured of your own conduct I would not. But 'tis but reasonable that since I consent to like a man without the vile consideration of money, he should give me a very evident demonstration of his wit. Therefore let me see you undermine my Lady Touchwood, as you boasted, and force her to give her consent, and then——

Mel. I'll do 't.

Cynth. And I'll do 't.

Mel. This very next ensuing hour of eight o'clock is the last minute of her reign, unless the devil assist her *in propria persona*.

Cynth. Well, if the devil should assist her and your plot miscarry——

Mel. Aye, what am I to trust to then?

Cynth. Why, if you give me very clear demonstration that it was the devil, I'll allow for irresistible odds. But if I find it to be only chance, or destiny, or unlucky stars, or anything but the very devil, I'm inexorable. Only still I'll keep my word, and live a maid for your sake.

Mel. And you won't die one, for your own, so still there's hope.

Cynth. Here's my mother-in-law and your friend, Careless. I would not have 'em see us together yet. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter CARELESS and LADY PLYANT.

Lady Plyant. I swear, Mr. Careless, you are very alluring and say so many fine things, and nothing is so moving to me as a fine thing. Well, I must do you this justice, and declare in the face of the world never anybody gained so far upon me as yourself. With blushes I must own it. You have shaken, as I may say, the very foundation of my honour. Well, sure if I escape your importunities, I shall value myself as long as I live, I swear.

Care. [*sighing*]. And despise me.

Lady Plyant. The last of any man in the world, by my purity. Now you make me swear. Oh, gratitude forbid that I should ever be wanting in a respectful acknowledgment of an entire resignation of all my best wishes for the person and parts of so accomplished a person, whose merit challenges much more, I'm sure, than my illiterate praises can description.

Care. [*in a whining tone*]. Ah, heavens, madam! you ruin me with kindness. Your charming tongue pursues the victory of your eyes, while at your feet your poor adorer dies.

Lady Plyant. Ah! very fine.

Care. [*still whining*]. Ah! why are you so fair, so bewitching fair? Oh, let me grow to the ground here and feast upon that hand. Oh, let me press it to my heart, my trembling heart. The nimble movement shall instruct your pulse and teach it to alarm desire. [*Aside.*] Zoons, I'm almost at the end of my cant, if she does not yield quickly.

Lady Plyant. Oh, that's so passionate and fine, I cannot hear it. I am not safe if I stay, and must leave you.

Care. And must you leave me? Rather let me languish out a wretched life and breathe my soul beneath your feet. [*Aside.*] I must say the same thing over again, and can't help it.

Lady Plyant. I swear I'm ready to languish too. Oh, my honour! Whither is it going? I protest you have given me the palpitation of the heart.

Care. Can you be so cruel?

Lady Plyant. Oh, rise, I beseech you. Say no more till you rise. Why did you kneel so long? I swear I was so transported I did not see it. Well, to show you how far you have gained upon me, I assure you if Sir Paul should die of all mankind there's none I'd sooner make my second choice.

Care. Oh Heaven! I can't outlive this night without your favour. I feel my spirits faint, a general dampness overspreads my face, a cold deadly dew already vents through all my pores, and will to-morrow wash me forever from your sight and drown me in my tomb.

Lady Plyant. Oh, you have conquered. Sweet, melting, moving sir, you have conquered. What heart of marble can refrain to weep and yield to such sad sayings? [*Cries.*

Care. I thank Heaven they are the saddest that I ever said. Oh! [*Aside.*] I shall never contain laughter.

Lady Plyant. Oh, I yield myself all up to your uncontrollable embraces. Say, thou dear dying man, when, where, and how? Ah, there's Sir Paul.

Care. 'Slife, yonder's Sir Paul, but if he were not come, I'm so transported I cannot speak. [*Gives her a note.*] This note will inform you. [*Exit.*]

Enter SIR PAUL and CYNTHIA.

Sir Paul. Thou art my tender lambkin, and shalt do what thou wilt. But endeavour to forget this Mellefont.

Cynth. I would obey you to my power, sir, but if I have not him I have sworn never to marry.

Sir Paul. Never to marry! Heavens forbid! Must I neither have sons nor grandsons? Must the family of the Plyants be utterly extinct for want of issue male? Oh impiety! But did you swear, did that sweet creature swear? Ha? How durst you swear without my consent, ah? Gadsbud, who am I?

Cynth. Pray don't be angry, sir. When I swore, I had your consent, and therefore I swore.

Sir Paul. Why, then the revoking my consent does annul, or make of none effect your oath. So you may unswear it again. The law will allow it.

Cynth. Aye, but my conscience never will.

Sir Paul. Gadsbud, no matter for that. Conscience and law never go together; you must not expect that.

Lady Plyant. Aye, but, Sir Paul, I conceive if she has sworn, d'ye mark me, if she has once sworn, it is most unchristian, inhuman, and obscene that she should break it. [*Aside.*] I'll make up the match again, because Mr. Careless said it would oblige him.

Sir Paul. Does your ladyship conceive so? Why, I was

of that opinion once too. Nay, if your ladyship conceives so, I'm of that opinion again, but I can neither find my lord nor my lady to know what they intend.

Lady Plyant. I'm satisfied that my cousin Mellefont has been much wronged.

Cynth. [*aside*]. I'm amazed to find her of our side, for I'm sure she loved him.

Lady Plyant. I know my Lady Touchwood has no kindness for him, and besides I have been informed by Mr. Careless that Mellefont had never anything more than a profound respect. That he has owned himself to be my admirer 'tis true, but he was never so presumptuous to entertain any dishonourable notions of things. So that if this be made plain, I don't see how my daughter can in conscience, or honour, or anything in the world——

Sir Paul. Indeed, if this be made plain, as my lady your mother says, child——

Lady Plyant. Plain! I was informed of it by Mr. Careless, and I assure you Mr. Careless is a person that has a most extraordinary respect and honour for you, Sir Paul.

Cynth. [*aside*]. And for your ladyship too, I believe, or else you had not changed sides so soon. Now I begin to find it.

Sir Paul. I am much obliged to Mr. Careless really. He is a person that I have a great value for, not only for that, but because he has a great veneration for your ladyship.

Lady Plyant. Oh 'las! no indeed, Sir Paul. 'Tis upon your account.

Sir Paul. No, I protest and vow, I have no title to his esteem, but in having the honour to appertain in some measure to your ladyship. That's all.

Lady Plyant. Oh law, now, I swear and declare, it shan't be so. You're too modest, Sir Paul.

Sir Paul. It becomes me, when there is any comparison made between——

Lady Plyant. Oh, fie, fie, Sir Paul, you'll put me out of countenance. Your very obedient and affectionate wife, that's all, and highly honoured in that title.

Sir Paul. Gadsbud, I am transported! Give me leave to kiss your ladyship's hand.

Cynth. [aside]. That my poor father should be so very silly.

Lady Plyant. My lip indeed, Sir Paul. I swear you shall.

[He kisses her, and bows very low.]

Sir Paul. I humbly thank your ladyship. *[Aside.]* I don't know whether I fly on ground, or walk in air. Gadsbud, she was never thus before. Well, I must own myself the most beholden to Mr. Careless. As sure as can be this is all his doing, something that he has said. Well, 'tis a rare thing to have an ingenious friend. *[Aloud.]* Well, your ladyship is of opinion that the match may go forward?

Lady Plyant. By all means. Mr. Careless has satisfied me of the matter.

Sir Paul. Well, why then, lamb, you may keep your oath, but have a care of making rash vows. Come hither to me and kiss Papa.

Lady Plyant [aside]. I swear and declare I am in such a twitter to read Mr. Careless's letter that I can't forbear any longer. But though I may read all letters first by prerogative, yet I'll be sure to be unsuspected this time. *[Aloud.]* Sir Paul.

Sir Paul. Did your ladyship call?

Lady Plyant. Nay, not to interrupt you, my dear. Only lend me your letter which you had from your steward to-day. I would look upon the account again, and maybe increase your allowance.

Sir Paul. There it is, madam. Do you want a pen and ink?

[Bows and gives the letter.]

Lady Plyant. No, no, nothing else, I thank you, Sir Paul.
[*Aside.*] So now I can read my own letter under the cover of his.

Sir Paul [to CYNTHIA]. He? And wilt thou bring a grandson at nine months' end, he? A brave chopping boy? I'll settle a thousand pound a year upon the rogue as soon as ever he looks me in the face, I will, gadsbud. I'm overjoyed to think I have any of my family that will bring children into the world. For I would fain have some resemblance of myself in my posterity, he, Thy? Can't you contrive that affair, girl? Do, gadsbud, think on thy old father. Eh? Make the young rogue as like as you can.

Cynth. I'm glad to see you so merry, sir.

Sir Paul. Merry! gadsbud, I'm serious. I'll give thee five hundred pound for every inch of him that resembles me. Ah! this eye, this left eye! A thousand pound for this left eye. This has done execution in its time, girl. Why, thou hast my leer, hussy, just thy father's leer. Let it be transmitted to the young rogue by the help of imagination. Why, 'tis the mark of our family, Thy. Our house is distinguished by a languishing eye, as the house of Austria is by a thick lip. Ah! when I was of your age, hussy, I would have held fifty to one I could have drawn my own picture. Gadsbud, I could have done. Not so much as you, neither, but—— Nay, don't blush.

Cynth. I don't blush, sir, for I vow I don't understand.

Sir Paul. Pshaw, pshaw, you fib, you baggage. You do understand, and you shall understand. Come, don't be so nice. Gadsbud, don't learn after your mother-in-law, my lady, here. Marry, Heaven forbid that you should follow her example! That would spoil all indeed. Bless us, if you should take a vagary and make a rash resolution on your wedding night to die a maid, as she did, all were ruined, all my hopes lost. My heart would break, and my estate

would be left to the wide world. Eh? I hope you are a better Christian than to think of living a nun. Eh? Answer me.

Cynth. I'm all obedience, sir, to your commands.

Lady Plyant. [*aside, having read the letter*]. Oh, dear Mr. Careless, I swear he writes charmingly, and he looks charmingly, and he has charmed me as much as I have charmed him, and so I'll tell him in the wardrobe when 'tis dark. Oh criminy! I hope Sir Paul has not seen both letters. [*Puts the wrong letter hastily up, and gives him her own.*] Sir Paul, here's your letter. To-morrow morning I'll settle accounts to your advantage.

Enter BRISK.

Brisk. Sir Paul, gadsbud, you're an uncivil person, let me tell you, and all that. And I did not think it had been in you.

Sir Paul. Oh law, what's the matter now? I hope you are not angry, Mr. Brisk.

Brisk. Deuce take me, I believe you intend to marry your daughter yourself. You're always brooding over her, like an old hen, as if she were not well hatched, egad! Eh?

Sir Paul. Good, strange! Mr. Brisk is such a merry facetious person, he, he, he! No, no, I have done with her, I have done with her now.

Brisk. The fiddles have stayed this hour in the hall, and my Lord Froth wants a partner. We can never begin without her.

Sir Paul. Go, go, child, go, get you gone and dance and be merry. I'll come and look at you by and by. Where's my son Mellefont? [*Exit CYNTHIA.*

Lady Plyant. I'll send him to them. I know where he is. [*Exit.*

Brisk. Sir Paul, will you send Careless into the hall if you meet him?

Sir Paul. I will, I will. I'll go and look for him on purpose. *[Exit.]*

Brisk. So, now they are all gone, and I have an opportunity to practise. Ah, my dear Lady Froth! She's a most engaging creature, if she were not so fond of that damned coxcomby lord of hers. And yet I am forced to allow him wit too to keep in with him. No matter, she's a woman of parts, and, egad! parts will carry her. She said she would follow me into the gallery. Now to make my approaches. Hem, hem! Ah, madam! *[Bows.]* Pox on 't, why should I disparage my parts by thinking what to say? None but dull rogues *think*. Witty men, like rich fellows, are always ready for all expenses, while your blockheads, like poor needy scoundrels, are forced to examine their stock and forecast the charges of the day. Here she comes. I'll seem not to see her and try to win her with a new airy invention of my own. Hem!

Enter LADY FROTH.

Brisk [*sings, walking about*]. "I'm sick with love," ha, ha, ha! "prithee, come cure me. I'm sick with," etc. Oh, ye powers! Oh, my Lady Froth, my Lady Froth! My Lady Froth! Heigho! Break, heart! Gods, I thank you. *[Stands musing with his arms across.]*

Lady Froth. Oh heavens, Mr. Brisk! What's the matter?

Brisk. My Lady Froth! Your ladyship's most humble servant. The matter, madam? Nothing, madam, nothing at all, egad! I was fallen into the most agreeable amusement in the whole province of contemplation. That's all. *[Aside.]* I'll seem to conceal my passion, and that will look like respect.

Lady Froth. Bless me, why did you call out upon me so loud?

Brisk. Oh Lord, I, madam? I beseech your ladyship, when?

Lady Froth. Just now, as I came in. Bless me, why, don't you know it?

Brisk. Not I, let me perish. But did I? Strange! I confess your ladyship was in my thoughts, and I was in a sort of dream that did in a manner represent a very pleasing object to my imagination, but, but did I indeed? To see how love and murder will out! But did I really name my Lady Froth?

Lady Froth. Three times aloud, as I love letters. But did you talk of love? Oh Parnassus! Who would have thought Mr. Brisk could have been in love, ha, ha, ha? Oh heavens! I thought you could have no mistress but the nine Muses.

Brisk. No more I have, egad! for I adore 'em all in your ladyship. Let me perish, I don't know whether to be splenetic or airy upon 't. The deuce take me if I can tell whether I am glad or sorry that your ladyship has made the discovery.

Lady Froth. Oh, be merry by all means. Prince Volscius in love! Ha, ha, ha!*

Brisk. Oh, barbarous, to turn me into ridicule! Yet, ha, ha, ha! The deuce take me, I can't help laughing myself, ha, ha, ha! Yet by heavens I have a violent passion for your ladyship, seriously.

Lady Froth. Seriously? Ha, ha, ha!

Brisk. Seriously, ha, ha, ha! Gad, I have, for all I laugh.

Lady Froth. Ha, ha, ha! What d'ye think I laugh at? Ha, ha, ha!

Brisk. Me, egad! ha, ha!

Lady Froth. No, the deuce take me if I don't laugh at

* A quotation from *The Rehearsal*, iii, 2.

myself. For hang me if I have not a violent passion for Mr. Brisk, ha, ha, ha!

Brisk. Seriously?

Lady Froth. Seriously, ha, ha, ha!

Brisk. That's well enough, let me perish, ha, ha, ha! Oh, miraculous, what a happy discovery! Ah, my dear charming Lady Froth!

Lady Froth. Oh, my adored Mr. Brisk! [*Embrace.*]

Enter LORD FROTH.

Lord Froth. The company are all ready. How now?

Brisk [*softly to her*]. Zoons, madam, there's my lord.

Lady Froth [*softly to him*]. Take no notice, but observe me. [*Aloud.*] Now cast off and meet me at the lower end of the room, and then join hands again. I could teach my lord this dance purely, but I vow, Mr. Brisk, I can't tell how to come so near any other man. [*They pretend to practise part of a country dance.*] Oh, here's my lord. Now you shall see me do it with him.

Lord Froth [*aside*]. Oh, I see there's no harm yet. But I don't like this familiarity.

Lady Froth. Shall you and I do our close dance to show Mr. Brisk?

Lord Froth. No, my dear, do it with him.

Lady Froth. I'll do it with him, my lord, when you are out of the way.

Brisk [*aside*]. That's good, egad! that's good. Deuce take me, I can hardly hold laughing in his face.

Lord Froth. Any other time, my dear, or we'll dance it below.

Lady Froth. With all my heart.

Brisk. Come, my lord, I'll wait on you. [*To her.*] My charming witty angel!

Lady Froth. We shall have whispering time enough, you know, since we are partners. [*Exit.*]

Enter LADY PLYANT and CARELESS.

Lady Plyant. Oh, Mr. Careless, Mr. Careless, I'm ruined, I'm undone.

Care. What's the matter, madam?

Lady Plyant. Oh, the unluckiest accident! I'm afraid I shan't live to tell it you.

Care. Heaven forbid! What is it?

Lady Plyant. I'm in such a fright. The strangest quandary and premunire!* I'm all over in a universal agitation, I dare swear every circumstance of me trembles. Oh, your letter, your letter! By an unfortunate mistake I have given Sir Paul your letter instead of his own.

Care. That was unlucky.

Lady Plyant. Oh, yonder he comes reading of it. For Heaven's sake, step in here and advise me quickly, before he sees.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter SIR PAUL with the Letter.

Sir Paul. Oh Providence, what a conspiracy have I discovered! But let me see to make an end on 't. [*Reads.*] Hum. "After supper in the wardrobe by the gallery. If Sir Paul should surprise us, I have a commission from him to treat with you about the very matter of fact." Matter of fact! Very pretty. It seems then I am conducing to my own cuckoldom. Why, this is the very traitorous position of taking up arms by my authority against my person! Well, let me see. "Till then I languish in expectation of my adored charmer. Dying Ned Careless." Gadsbud, would that were a matter of fact too. Die, and be damned for a Judas Maccabeus and Iscariot both. Oh friendship! What art thou but a name? Henceforward let no man make a friend that would not be a cuckold. For whomsoever

* Originally an act in contempt of the Royal prerogative hence trouble, difficulty.

he receives into his bosom, will find the way to his bed, and there return his caresses with interest to his wife. Have I for this been pinioned night after night for three years past? Have I been swathed in blankets till I have been even deprived of motion? Have I approached the marriage bed with reverence as to a sacred shrine, and denied myself the enjoyment of lawful domestic pleasures to preserve its purity, and must I now find it polluted by foreign iniquity? Oh, my Lady Plyant, you were chaste as ice, but you are melted now, and false as water. But Providence has been constant to me in discovering this conspiracy. Still I am beholden to Providence. If it were not for Providence, sure, poor Sir Paul, thy heart would break.

Enter LADY PLYANT.

Lady Plyant. So, sir, I see you have read the letter. Well now, Sir Paul, what do you think of your friend Careless? Has he been treacherous, or did you give his insolence a licence to make trial of your wife's suspected virtue? Do you see here? [*Snatches the letter, as in anger.*] Look, read it! Gads my life, if I thought it were so, I would this moment renounce all communication with you. Ungrateful monster! Eh? Is it so? Aye, I see it, a plot upon my honour. Your guilty cheeks confess it. Oh, where shall wronged virtue fly for reparation? I'll be divorced this instant.

Sir Paul. Gadsbud, what shall I say? This is the strangest surprise. Why, I don't know anything at all, nor I don't know whether there be anything at all in the world or no.

Lady Plyant. I thought I should try you, false man. I, that never dissembled in my life! Yet to make trial of you pretended to like that monster of iniquity, Careless, and found out that contrivance to let you see this letter, which

now I find was of your own inditing. I do, heathen, I do. See my face no more. I'll be divorced presently.

Sir Paul. Oh, strange, what will become of me? I'm so amazed, and so overjoyed, so afraid, and so sorry. But did you give me this letter on purpose? Eh? Did you?

Lady Plyant. Did I? Do you doubt me, Turk, Saracen? I have a cousin that's a proctor in the Commons. I'll go to him instantly.

Sir Paul. Hold, stay, I beseech your ladyship. I'm so overjoyed. Stay, I'll confess all.

Lady Plyant. What will you confess, Jew?

Sir Paul. Why, now as I hope to be saved, I had no hand in this letter. Nay, hear me, I beseech your ladyship. The devil take me now if he did not go beyond my commission. If I desired him to do any more than speak a good word only just for me, gadsbud, only for poor Sir Paul, I'm an Anabaptist, or a Jew, or what you please to call me.

Lady Plyant. Why, is not here matter of fact?

Sir Paul. Aye, but by your own virtue and continency that matter of fact is all his own doing. I confess I had a great desire to have some honours conferred upon me, which lie all in your ladyship's breast, and he being a well-spoken man I desired him to intercede for me.

Lady Plyant. Did you so, presumption? Oh! he comes, the Tarquin comes. I cannot bear his sight. [*Exit.*]

Enter CARELESS.

Care. Sir Paul, I'm glad I've met with you. Gad, I have said all I could, but can't prevail. Then my friendship to you has carried me a little farther in this matter.

Sir Paul. Indeed. Well, sir? [*Aside.*] I'll dissemble with him a little.

Care. Why, faith, I have in my time known honest gentlemen abused by a pretended coyeness in their wives,

and I had a mind to try my lady's virtue. And when I could not prevail for you, gad, I pretended to be in love myself. But all in vain, she would not hear a word upon that subject. Then I writ a letter to her. I don't know what effects that will have, but I'll be sure to tell you when I do. Though by this light I believe her virtue is impregnable.

Sir Paul. Oh Providence! Providence! What discoveries are here made! Why, this is better and more miraculous than the rest.

Care. What do you mean?

Sir Paul. I can't tell you, I'm so overjoyed. Come along with me to my lady. I can't contain myself. Come, my dear friend.

Care. [*aside*]. So, so. So this difficulty's over. [*Exeunt.*

Enter MELLEFONT and MASKWELL, from different Doors.

Mel. Maskwell! I have been looking for you. 'Tis within a quarter of eight.

Mask. My lady is just gone into my lord's closet. You had best steal into her chamber before she comes, and lie concealed there. Otherwise she may lock the door when we are together, and you not easily get in to surprise us.

Mel. Eh? You say true.

Mask. You had best make haste, for after she has made some apology to the company for her own and my lord's absence all this while, she'll retire to her chamber instantly.

Mel. I go this moment. Now, fortune, I defy thee.

[*Exit.*

Mask. I confess you may be allowed to be secure in your own opinion. The appearance is very fair, but I have an after-game to play that shall turn the tables. And here comes the man that I must manage.

Enter LORD TOUCHWOOD.

Lord Touch. Maskwell, you are the man I wished to meet.

Mask. I am happy to be in the way of your lordship's commands.

Lord Touch. I have always found you prudent and careful in anything that has concerned me or my family.

Mask. I were a villain else. I am bound by duty and gratitude, and my own inclination, to be ever your lordship's servant.

Lord Touch. Enough. You are my friend. I know it. Yet there has been a thing in your knowledge which has concerned me nearly, that you have concealed from me.

Mask. My lord!

Lord Touch. Nay, I excuse your friendship to my unnatural nephew thus far, but I know you have been privy to his impious designs upon my wife. This evening she has told me all. Her good nature concealed it as long as was possible, but he perseveres so in villainy that she has told me even you were weary of dissuading him, though you have once actually hindered him from forcing her.

Mask. I am sorry, my lord, I can't make you an answer. This is an occasion in which I would not willingly be silent.

Lord Touch. I know you would excuse him. And I know as well that you can't.

Mask. Indeed, I was in hopes 't had been a youthful heat that might have soon boiled over, but——

Lord Touch. Say on.

Mask. I have nothing more to say, my lord, but to express my concern, for I think his frenzy increases daily.

Lord Touch. How? Give me but proof of it, ocular proof, that I may justify my dealing with him to the world, and share my fortunes!

Mask. Oh, my lord! Consider. That is hard. Besides,

time may work upon him. Then for me to do it! I have professed an everlasting friendship to him.

Lord Touch. He is your friend, and what am I?

Mask. I am answered.

Lord Touch. Fear not his displeasure. I will put you out of his, and fortune's power. And for that thou art scrupulously honest, I will secure thy fidelity to him, and give my honour never to own any discovery that you shall make me. Can you give me a demonstrative proof? Speak!

Mask. I wish I could not. To be plain, my lord, I intended this evening to have tried all arguments to dissuade him from a design, which I suspect; and if I had not succeeded, to have informed your lordship of what I knew.

Lord Touch. I thank you. What is the villain's purpose?

Mask. He has owned nothing to me of late, and what I mean now is only a bare suspicion of my own. If your lordship will meet me a quarter of an hour hence there, in that lobby by my lady's bed-chamber, I shall be able to tell you more.

Lord Touch. I will.

Mask. My duty to your lordship makes me do a severe piece of justice.

Lord Touch. I will be secret and reward your honesty beyond your hopes. *[Exeunt severally.]*

Scene II—LADY TOUCHWOOD'S Chamber.

MELLEFONT is discovered alone.

Mel. Pray Heaven my aunt keep touch with her assignation! Oh, that her lord were but sweating behind this hanging with the expectation of what I shall see. Hist! she comes. Little does she think what a mine is just ready to spring under her feet. But to my post.

[Goes behind the hangings.]

Enter LADY TOUCHWOOD.

Lady Touch. 'Tis eight o'clock. Methinks I should have found him here. Who does not prevent the hour of love, outstays the time; for to be dully punctual is too slow. [*Enter* MASKWELL, MELLEFONT *absconding.*] I was accusing you of neglect.

Mask. I confess you do reproach me when I see you here before me; but 'tis fit I should be still behindhand, still to be more and more indebted to your goodness.

Lady Touch. You can excuse a fault too well not to have been to blame. A ready answer shows you were prepared.

Mask. Guilt is ever at a loss, and confusion waits upon it, when innocence and bold truth are always ready for expression.

Lady Touch. Not in love. Words are the weak support of cold indifference; love has no language to be heard.

Mask. Excess of joy has made me stupid! Thus may my lips be ever closed. [*Kisses her.*] And thus. Oh, who would not lose his speech upon condition to have joys above it?

Lady Touch. Hold, let me lock the door first.

[*Goes to the door.*]

Mask. [*aside*]. That I believed. 'Twas well I left the private passage open.

Lady Touch. So. That's safe.

Mask. And so may all your pleasures be, and secret as this kiss!

Mel. [*leaps out*]. And may all treachery be thus discovered!

Lady Touch. Ah!

[*Shrieks.*]

Mel. Villain!

[*Offers to draw.*]

Mask. Nay, then, there's but one way. [*Runs out.*]

Mel. Say you so? Were you provided for an escape? Hold,

madam, you have no more holes to your burrow. I'll stand between you and this salley-port.

Lady Touch. Thunder strike thee dead for this deceit! Immediate lightning blast thee, me and the whole world! Oh! I could rack myself, play the vulture to my own heart, and gnaw it piecemeal for not boding to me this misfortune.

Mel. Be patient.

Lady Touch. Be damned.

Mel. Consider, I have you on the hook. You will but flounder yourself a-weary, and be nevertheless my prisoner.

Lady Touch. I'll hold my breath and die, but I'll be free.

Mel. Oh, madam, have a care of dying unprepared. I doubt you have some unrepented sins that may hang heavy, and retard your flight.

Lady Touch. Oh! what shall I do, say? Whither shall I turn? Has hell no remedy?

Mel. None. Hell has served you even as Heaven has done, left you to yourself. You're in a kind of Erasmus paradise.* Yet if you please you may make it a purgatory, and with a little penance and my absolution all this may turn to good account.

Lady Touch. [*aside*]. Hold in my passion, and fall, fall a little, thou swelling heart. Let me have some intermission of this rage, and one minute's coolness to dissemble.

[*She weeps.*]

Mel. You have been to blame. I like those tears, and hope they are of the purest kind, penitential tears.

Lady Touch. Oh, the scene was shifted quick before me. I had not time to think. I was surprised to see a monster in the glass, and now I find 'tis myself. Can you have mercy to forgive the faults I have imagined, but never put in practice? Oh, consider, consider how fatal you have

* Erasmus was believed to be hanging "betwixt Heaven and Hell."

been to me. You have already killed the quiet of this life. The love of you was the first wandering fire that ever misled my steps, and while I had only that in view, I was betrayed into unthought-of ways of ruin.

Mel. May I believe this true?

Lady Touch. Oh, be not cruelly incredulous. How can you doubt these streaming eyes? Keep the severest eye over all my future conduct, and if I once relapse, let me not hope forgiveness. 'Twill ever be in your power to ruin me. My lord shall sign to your desires. I will myself create your happiness, and Cynthia shall be this night your bride. Do but conceal my failings, and forgive.

Mel. Upon such terms I will be ever yours in every honest way.

MASKWELL *softly introduces LORD TOUCHWOOD, and retires.*

Mask. [*to LORD TOUCHWOOD*]. I have kept my word. He's here, but I must not be seen. [*Exit.*

Lord Touch. Hell and amazement, she's in tears.

Lady Touch. [*kneeling*]. Eternal blessings thank you. [*Aside.*] Ha! my lord listening! Oh, fortune has overpaid me all, all! All's my own!

Mel. Nay, I beseech you, rise.

Lady Touch. [*aloud*]. Never, never! I'll grow to the ground, be buried quick beneath it, ere I'll be consenting to so damned a sin as incest, unnatural incest.

Mel. Ha!

Lady Touch. Oh, cruel man, will you not let me go? I'll forgive all that's past. Oh Heaven, you will not ravish me?

Mel. Damnation!

Lord Touch. Monster, dog! your life shall answer this.

[*Draws and runs at MELLEFONT, is held by LADY TOUCHWOOD.*

Lady Touch. Oh heavens, my lord! Hold, hold for Heaven's sake.

Mel. [*aside*]. Confusion, my uncle! Oh, the damned sorceress!

Lady Touch. Moderate your rage, good my lord. He's mad, alas! he's mad. Indeed he is, my lord, and knows not what he does. See how wild he looks.

Mel. By Heaven, 'twere senseless not to be mad and see such witchcraft.

Lady Touch. My lord, you hear him. He talks idly.

Lord Touch. Hence from my sight, thou living infamy to my name. When next I see that face, I'll write villain in 't with my sword's point.

Mel. Now, by my soul, I will not go till I have made known my wrongs. Nay, till I have made known yours, which if possible are greater. Though she has all the host of hell her servants!

Lady Touch. Alas! he raves. Talks very poetry! For Heaven's sake away, my lord. He'll either tempt you to extravagance, or commit some himself.

Mel. Death and furies, will you not hear me? Why, by Heaven she laughs, grins, points to your back. She forks out cuckoldom with her fingers, and you're running horn-mad after your fortune.

[*As she is going she turns back and smiles at him.*]

Lord Touch. I fear he's mad indeed. Let's send Maskwell to him.

Mel. Send him to her.

Lady Touch. Come, come, good, my lord. My heart aches so. I shall faint if I stay.

[*Exeunt LORD and LADY TOUCHWOOD.*]

Mel. Oh, I could curse my stars, fate, and chance, all causes and accidents of fortune in this life. But to what purpose? Yet, 'sdeath, for a man to have the fruit of all

his industry grow full and ripe, ready to drop into his mouth, and just when he holds out his hand to gather it to have a sudden whirlwind come, tear up tree and all, and bear away the very root and foundation of his hopes! What temper can contain? They talk of sending Maskwell to me; I never had more need of him. But what can he do? Imagination cannot form a fairer and more plausible design than this of his which has miscarried. Oh, my precious aunt! I shall never thrive without I deal with the devil, or another woman.

Women, like flames, have a destroying power,
Ne'er to be quenched, till they themselves devour.

[*Exit.*]

ACT V

Scene I—*A Gallery in the LORD TOUCHWOOD's House.*

Enter LADY TOUCHWOOD and MASKWELL.

Lady Touch. Was 't not lucky?

Mask. Lucky! Fortune is your own, and 'tis her interest so to be. By Heaven, I believe you can control her power, and she fears it. Though chance brought my lord, 'twas your own art that turned it to advantage.

Lady Touch. 'Tis true, it might have been my ruin. But yonder's my lord. I believe he's coming to find you. I'll not be seen.

[*Exit.*]

Mask. So. I durst not own my introducing my lord, though it succeeded well for her, for she would have suspected a design which I should have been puzzled to excuse. My lord is thoughtful. I'll be so too; yet he shall know my thoughts, or think he does.

Enter LORD TOUCHWOOD.

Mask. What have I done?

Lord Touch. [*aside*]. Talking to himself.

Mask. 'Twas honest, and shall I be rewarded for it? No, 'twas honest, therefore I shan't. Nay, rather therefore I ought not, for it rewards itself.

Lord Touch. [*aside*]. Unequalled virtue!

Mask. But should it be known? Then I have lost a friend. He was an ill man, and I have gained, for half myself I lent him, and that I have recalled. So I have served myself, and what is yet better, I have served a worthy lord to whom I owe myself.

Lord Touch. [*aside*]. Excellent man!

Mask. Yet I am wretched. Oh, there is a secret burns within this breast, which should it once blaze forth would ruin all, consume my honest character, and brand me with the name of villain.

Lord Touch. Ha!

Mask. Why do I love? Yet Heaven and my waking conscience are my witnesses, I never gave one working thought a vent, which might discover that I loved, nor ever must. No, let it prey upon my heart, for I would rather die than seem once, barely seem, dishonest. Oh, should it once be known I love fair Cynthia, all this that I have done would look like rival's malice, false friendship to my lord, and base self-interest. Let me perish first, and from this hour avoid all sight and speech, and, if I can, all thought of that pernicious beauty. Ha! But what is my distraction doing? I am wildly talking to myself, and some ill chance might have directed malicious ears this way.

[*Seems to start, seeing my lord.*]

Lord Touch. Start not. Let guilty and dishonest souls start at the revelation of their thoughts, but be thou fixed, as is thy virtue.

Mask. I am confounded and beg your lordship's pardon for those free discourses which I have had with myself.

Lord Touch. Come, I beg your pardon that I overheard

you, and yet it shall not need. Honest Maskwell, thy and my good genius led me hither. Mine, in that I have discovered so much manly virtue; thine, in that thou shalt have due reward of all thy worth. Give me thy hand. My nephew is the alone remaining branch of all our ancient family; him I thus blow away, and constitute thee in his room to be my heir.

Mask. Now, Heaven forbid——

Lord Touch. No more: I have resolved. The writings are ready drawn, and wanted nothing but to be signed and have his name inserted. Yours will fill the blank as well. I will have no reply. Let me command this time, for 'tis the last, in which I will assume authority. Hereafter you shall rule where I have power.

Mask. I humbly would petition——

Lord Touch. Is 't for yourself? [*MASKWELL pauses.*] I'll hear of nought for anybody else.

Mask. Then witness Heaven for me, this wealth and honour was not of my seeking, nor would I build my fortune on another's ruin. I had but one desire.

Lord Touch. Thou shalt enjoy it. If all I'm worth in wealth or interest can purchase Cynthia, she is thine. I'm sure Sir Paul's consent will follow fortune; I'll quickly show him which way that is going.

Mask. You oppress me with bounty. My gratitude is weak, and shrinks beneath the weight and cannot rise to thank you. What, enjoy my love! Forgive the transports of a blessing so unexpected, so unhop'd for, so unthought of!

Lord Touch. I will confirm it, and rejoice with thee.

[*Exit.*]

Mask. This is prosperous indeed. Why, let him find me out a villain, settled in possession of a fair estate, and full fruition of my love, I'll bear the railings of a losing game-

ster. But should he find me out before? 'Tis dangerous to delay. Let me think. Should my lord proceed to treat openly of my marriage with Cynthia, all must be discovered, and Mellefont can be no longer blinded. It must not be. Nay, should my lady know it, aye, then were fine work indeed! Her fury would spare nothing, though she involved herself in ruin. No, it must be by stratagem. I must deceive Mellefont once more and get my lord to consent to my private management. He comes opportunely. Now will I, in my old way, discover the whole and real truth of the matter to him, that he may not suspect one word on 't.

No mask like open truth to cover lies,
As to go naked is the best disguise.

Enter MELLEFONT.

Mel. Oh, Maskwell, what hopes? I am confounded in a maze of thoughts, each leading into one another, and all ending in perplexity. My uncle will not see nor hear me.

Mask. No matter, sir, don't trouble your head. All's in my power.

Mel. How, for Heaven's sake?

Mask. Little do you think that your aunt has kept her word. How the devil she wrought my lord into this dotage, I know not; but he's gone to Sir Paul about my marriage with Cynthia, and has appointed me his heir.

Mel. The devil he has! What's to be done?

Mask. I have it. It must be by stratagem, for it's vain to make application to him. I think I have that in my head that cannot fail. Where's Cynthia?

Mel. In the garden.

Mask. Let us go and consult her. My life for yours I cheat my lord.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter LORD TOUCHWOOD and LADY TOUCHWOOD.

Lady Touch. Maskwell your heir, and marry Cynthia!

Lord Touch. I cannot do too much for so much merit.

Lady Touch. But this is a thing of too great moment to be so suddenly resolved. Why Cynthia? Why must he be married? Is there not reward enough in raising his low fortune, but he must mix his blood with mine and wed my niece? How know you that my brother will consent, or she? Nay, he himself perhaps may have affections otherwhere.

Lord Touch. No, I am convinced he loves her.

Lady Touch. Maskwell love Cynthia? Impossible!

Lord Touch. I tell you, he confessed it to me.

Lady Touch. [*aside*]. Confusion! How's this?

Lord Touch. His humility long stifled his passion, and his love of Mellefont would have made him still conceal it. But by encouragement I wrung the secret from him and know he's no way to be rewarded but in her. I'll defer my farther proceedings in it till you have considered it; but remember how we are both indebted to him. [*Exit.*]

Lady Touch. Both indebted to him! Yes, we are both indebted to him, if you knew all. Villain! Oh, I am wild with this surprise of treachery. It is impossible; it cannot be. He love Cynthia! What, have I been bawd to his designs, his property* only, a baiting place? Now I see what made him false to Mellefont. Shame and distraction! I cannot bear it. Oh! what woman can bear to be a property? To be kindled to a flame, only to light him to another's arms! Oh! that I were fire indeed, that I might burn the vile traitor. What shall I do? How shall I think? I cannot think. All my designs are lost, my love unsated, my revenge unfinished, and fresh cause of fury from unthought-of plagues.

Enter SIR PAUL.

* Tool.

Sir Paul. Madam, sister, my lady sister, did you see my lady, my wife?

Lady Touch. Oh, torture!

Sir Paul. Gadsbud, I can't find her high nor low. Where can she be, think you?

Lady Touch. Where she's serving you, as all your sex ought to be served, making you a beast. Don't you know that you're a fool, brother?

Sir Paul. A fool? He, he, he! you're merry. No, no, not I, I know no such matter.

Lady Touch. Why then, you don't know half your happiness.

Sir Paul. That's a jest with all my heart, faith and troth. But harkee, my lord told me something of a revolution of things. I don't know what to make on't. Gadsbud, I must consult my wife. He talks of disinheriting his nephew, and I don't know what. Look you, sister, I must know what my girl has to trust to, or not a syllable of a wedding, gadsbud, to show you that I am not a fool.

Lady Touch. Hear me. Consent to the breaking off this marriage, and the promoting any other without consulting me, and I'll renounce all blood, all relation and concern with you forever. Nay, I'll be your enemy, and pursue you to destruction. I'll tear your eyes out and tread you under my feet.

Sir Paul. Why, what's the matter now? Good Lord, what's all this for? Pooh, here's a joke indeed. Why, where's my wife?

Lady Touch. With Careless, in the close arbour. He may want you by this time as much as you want her.

Sir Paul. Oh, if she be with Mr. Careless, 'tis well enough.

Lady Touch. Fool, sot, insensible ox! But remember what I said to you, or you had better eat your own horns, by this light you had. [Exit.]

Sir Paul. You're a passionate woman, gadsbud. But to say truth, all our family are choleric; I am the only peaceable person amongst 'em. [Exit.]

Enter MELLEFONT, MASKWELL and CYNTHIA.

Mel. I know no other way but this he has proposed, if you have love enough to run the venture.

Cynth. I don't know whether I have love enough, but I find I have obstinacy enough to pursue whatever I have once resolved, and a true female courage to oppose anything that resists my will, though 'twere reason itself.

Mask. That's right. Well, I'll secure the writings and run the hazard along with you.

Cynth. But how can the coach and six horses be got ready without suspicion?

Mask. Leave it to my care. That shall be so far from being suspected that it shall be got ready by my lord's own order.

Mel. How?

Mask. Why, I intend to tell my lord the whole matter of our contrivance. That's my way.

Mel. I don't understand you.

Mask. Why, I'll tell my lord I laid this plot with you on purpose to betray you, and that which put me upon it was the finding it impossible to gain the lady any other way, but in the hopes of her marrying you.

Mel. So.

Mask. So. Why, so. While you're busied in making yourself ready I'll wheedle her into the coach, and instead of you borrow my lord's chaplain, and so run away with her myself.

Mel. Oh, I conceive you. You'll tell him so?

Mask. Tell him so! Aye, why, you don't think I mean to do so?

Mel. No, no. Ha, ha! I dare swear thou wilt not.

Mask. Therefore, for our further security, I would have you disguised like a parson that if my lord should have curiosity to peep he may not discover you in the coach, but think the cheat is carried on as he would have it.

Mel. Excellent Maskwell! Thou wert certainly meant for a stateman or a Jesuit, but thou art too honest for one, and too pious for the other.

Mask. Well, get yourselves ready, and meet me in half an hour yonder in my lady's dressing-room. Go by the back stairs, and so we may slip down without being observed. I'll send the chaplain to you with his robes. I have made him my own, and ordered him to meet us to-morrow morning at St. Albans. There we will sum up this account to all our satisfactions.

Mel. Should I begin to thank or praise thee, I should waste the little time we have. [Exit.]

Mask. Madam, you will be ready?

Cynth. I will be punctual to the minute. [Going.]

Mask. Stay, I have a doubt. Upon second thoughts we had better meet in the chaplain's chamber here, the corner chamber at the end of this gallery. There is a back way into it, so that you need not come through this door, and a pair of private stairs leading down to the stables. It will be more convenient.

Cynth. I am guided by you. But Mellefont will mistake.

Mask. No, no, I'll after him immediately and tell him.

Cynth. I will not fail. [Exit.]

Mask. Why, *qui vult decipi decipiatur*. 'Tis no fault of mine. I have told 'em in plain terms how easy 'tis for me to cheat 'em, and if they will not hear the serpent's hiss, they must be stung into experience and future caution. Now to prepare my lord to consent to this. But first I

must instruct my little Levite.* There is no plot, public or private, that can expect to prosper without one of them has a finger in 't. He promised me to be within at this hour. Mr. Saygrace, Mr. Saygrace.

[Goes to the chamber door, and knocks.

Say. [looking out]. Sweet sir, I will but pen the last line of an acrostic, and be with you in the twinkling of an ejaculation, in the pronouncing of an Amen, or before you can——

Mask. Nay, good Mr. Saygrace, do not prolong the time by describing to me the shortness of your stay. Rather, if you please, defer the finishing of your wit, and let us talk about our business. It shall be tithes in your way.

Say. [enters]. You shall prevail. I would break off in the middle of a sermon to do you a pleasure.

Mask. You could not do me a greater—except the business in hand. Have you provided a habit for Mellefont?

Say. I have. They are ready in my chamber, together with a clean starched band and cuffs.

Mask. Good, let them be carried to him. Have you stitched the gown sleeve that he may be puzzled and waste time in putting it on?

Say. I have. The gown will not be endued without perplexity.

Mask. Meet me in half an hour here in your own chamber. When Cynthia comes, let there be no light, and do not speak, that she may not distinguish you from Mellefont. I'll urge haste, to excuse your silence.

Say. You have no more commands?

Mask. None, your text is short.

Say. But pithy, and I will handle it with discretion.

[Exit.

Mask. It will be the first you have so served.

* Chaplain, a slang expression.

Enter LORD TOUCHWOOD.

Lord Touch. Sure I was born to be controlled by those I should command. My very slaves will shortly give me rules how I shall govern them.

Mask. I am concerned to see your lordship discomposed.

Lord Touch. Have you seen my wife lately, or dis-obliged her?

Mask. No, my lord. [*Aside.*] What can this mean?

Lord Touch. Then Mellefont has urged somebody to incense her. Something she has heard of you which carries her beyond the bounds of patience.

Mask. [*aside*]. This I feared. [*Aloud.*] Did not your lordship tell of the honours you designed me?

Lord Touch. Yes.

Mask. 'Tis that. You know my lady has a high spirit. She thinks I am unworthy.

Lord Touch. Unworthy! 'Tis an ignorant pride in her to think so. Honesty to me is true nobility. However, 'tis my will it shall be so, and that should be convincing to her as much as reason. By Heaven, I'll not be wife-ridden! Were it possible it should be done this night.

Mask. [*aside*]. By Heaven, he meets my wishes! [*Aloud.*] Few things are impossible to willing minds.

Lord Touch. Instruct me how this may be done. You shall see I want no inclination.

Mask. I had laid a small design for to-morrow, as love will be inventing, which I thought to communicate to your lordship. But it may be as well done to-night.

Lord Touch. Here's company. Come this way and tell me. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter CARELESS and CYNTHIA.

Care. Is not that he, now gone out with my lord?

Cynth. Yes.

Care. By Heaven, there's treachery. The confusion that I saw your father in, my Lady Touchwood's passion, with what imperfectly I overheard between my lord and her, confirm me in my fears. Where's Mellefont?

Cynth. Here he comes.

Enter MELLEFONT.

Cynth. [*to MELLEFONT*]. Did Maskwell tell you anything of the chaplain's chamber?

Mel. No: my dear, will you get ready? The things are all in my chamber. I want nothing but the habit.

Care. You are betrayed, and Maskwell is the villain I always thought him.

Cynth. When you were gone, he said his mind was changed and bid me meet him in the chaplain's room, pretending immediately to follow you and give you notice.

Mel. How?

Care. There's Saygrace tripping by with a bundle under his arm. He cannot be ignorant that Maskwell means to use his chamber. Let's follow and examine him.

Mel. 'Tis loss of time. I cannot think him false.

[Exeunt MELLEFONT and CARELESS.]

Enter LORD TOUCHWOOD.

Cynth. My lord musing?

Lord Touch. [*not seeing her*]. He has a quick invention, if this were suddenly designed. Yet he says he had prepared my chaplain already.

Cynth. [*aside*]. How's this? Now I fear indeed.

Lord Touch. Cynthia here! Alone, fair cousin, and melancholy?

Cynth. Your lordship was thoughtful.

Lord Touch. My thoughts were on serious business, not worth your hearing.

Cynth. Mine were on treachery concerning you, and may be worth your hearing.

Lord Touch. Treachery concerning me! Pray, be plain. Hark! What noise?

Mask. [*within*]. Will you not hear me?

Lady Touch. [*within*]. No, monster! Traitor, no!

Cynth. My lady and Maskwell! This may be lucky. My lord, let me entreat you to stand behind this screen and listen. Perhaps this chance may give you proof of what you never could have believed from my suspicions.

CYNTHIA and LORD TOUCHWOOD *abscond, listening.*

Enter LADY TOUCHWOOD, *with a dagger, and* MASKWELL.

Lady Touch. You want but leisure to invent fresh falsehood and soothe me to a fond belief of all your fictions, but I will stab the lie that's forming in your heart and save a sin in pity to your soul.

Mask. Strike then, since you will have it so.

Lady Touch. Ha! A steady villain to the last.

Mask. Come, why do you dally with me thus?

Lady Touch. Thy stubborn temper shocks me, and you knew it would. This is cunning all, and not courage. No, I know thee well. But thou shalt miss thy aim.

Mask. Ha, ha, ha!

Lady Touch. Ha! Do you mock my rage? Then this shall punish your fond, rash contempt. Again smile! [*Goes to strike.*] And such a smile as speaks in ambiguity! Ten thousand meanings lurk in each corner of that various face.

Oh, that they were written in thy heart, that
I, with this, might lay thee open to my sight!
But then 'twill be too late to know.

Thou hast, thou hast found the only way to turn my rage.
Too well thou knowest my jealous soul could never bear

uncertainty. Speak then, and tell me. Yet are you silent? Oh, I am wildered in all passions! But thus my anger melts. [*Weeps.*] Here, take this poinard, for my very spirits faint, and I want strength to hold it. Thou hast disarmed my soul. [*Gives the dagger.*]

Lord Touch. [*aside*]. Amazement shakes me. Where will this end?

Mask. So, 'tis well. Let your wild fury have a vent and when you have temper tell me.

Lady Touch. Now, now, now I am calm, and can hear you.

Mask. [*aside*]. Thanks, my invention, and now I have it for you. [*Aloud.*] First tell me what urged you to this violence? For your passion broke in such imperfect terms, that yet I am to learn the cause.

Lady Touch. My lord himself surprised me with the news you were to marry Cynthia. That you had owned your love to him and his indulgence would assist you to attain your ends.

Cynth. [*to LORD TOUCHWOOD*]. How, my lord?

Lord Touch. Pray, forbear all resentments for a while and let us hear the rest.

Mask. I grant you in appearance all is true. I seemed consenting to my lord, nay, transported with the blessing. But could you think that I, who had been happy in your loved embraces, could ever be fond of an inferior slavery?

Lord Touch. Ha! Oh, poison to my ears, what do I hear?

Cynth. Nay, good my lord, forbear resentment. Let us hear it out.

Lord Touch. Yes, I will contain, though I could burst.

Mask. I that had wantoned in the rich circle of your world of love, could be confined within the puny province of a girl? No. Yet though I dote on each last favour more than all the rest, though I would give a limb for every look

you cheaply throw away on any other object of your love, yet so far I prize your pleasures o'er my own that all this seeming plot that I have laid has been to gratify your taste, and cheat the world to prove a faithful rogue to you.

Lady Touch. If this were true. But how can it be?

Mask. I have so contrived that Mellefont will presently, in the chaplain's habit, wait for Cynthia in your dressing-room. But I have put the change upon her, that she may be otherwise employed. Do you procure her nightgown, and with your hoods tied over your face meet him in her stead. You may go privately by the back stairs, and, unperceived, there you may propose to reinstate him in his uncle's favour, if he'll comply with your desires. His case is desperate and I believe he'll yield to any conditions. If not, here take this. [*Gives the dagger.*] You may employ it better than in the heart of one who is nothing when not yours.

Lady Touch. Thou can'st deceive everybody. Nay, thou hast deceived me; but 'tis as I would wish. Trusty villain, I could worship thee!

Mask. No more. It wants but a few minutes of the time, and Mellefont's love will carry him there before his hour.

Lady Touch. I go, I fly, incomparable Maskwell. [*Exit.*

Mask. So, this was a pinch indeed. My invention was upon the rack and made discovery of her last plot. I hope Cynthia and my chaplain will be ready. I'll prepare for the expedition. [*Exit.*

CYNTHIA and LORD TOUCHWOOD *come forward.*

Cynth. Now, my lord?

Lord Touch. Astonishment binds up my rage! Villainy upon villainy! Heavens! what a long track of dark deceit has this discovered! I am confounded when I look back and want a clue to guide me through the various mazes of unheard-of treachery. My wife! Damnation! my hell!

Cynth. My lord, have patience, and be sensible how great our happiness is, that this discovery was not made too late.

Lord Touch. I thank you, yet it may be still too late, if we don't presently prevent the execution of their plots. Ha! I'll do it. Where's Mellefont, my poor injured nephew? How shall I make him ample satisfaction?

Cynth. I dare answer for him.

Lord Touch. I do him fresh wrong to question his forgiveness; for I know him to be all goodness. Yet, my wife! Damn her. She'll think to meet him in that dressing-room. Was 't not so? And Maskwell will expect you in the chaplain's chamber. For once I'll add my plot too. Let us haste to find out and inform my nephew, and do you, quickly as you can, bring all the company into this gallery. I'll expose the strumpet and the villain. [Exeunt.

Enter LORD FROTH and SIR PAUL.

Lord Froth. By heavens, I have slept an age! Sir Paul, what o'clock is 't? Past eight, on my conscience. My lady's is the most inviting couch, and a slumber there is the prettiest amusement. But where's all the company?

Sir Paul. The company! Gadsbud, I don't know, my lord, but here's the strangest revolution, all turned topsy-turvy, as I hope for Providence.

Lord Froth. Oh heavens! what's the matter? Where's my wife?

Sir Paul. All turned topsy-turvy as sure as a gun.*

Lord Froth. How do you mean? My wife!

Sir Paul. The strangest posture of affairs!

Lord Froth. What, my wife?

Sir Paul. No, no, I mean the family. Your lady's affairs may be in a very good posture. I saw her go into the garden with Mr. Brisk.

* For certain, a slang idiom.

Lord Froth. How? Where? When? What to do?

Sir Paul. I suppose they have been laying their heads together.

Lord Froth. How?

Sir Paul. Nay, only about poetry, I suppose, my lord. Making couplets.

Lord Froth. Couplets!

Sir Paul. Oh, here they come.

Enter LADY FROTH and BRISK.

Brisk. My lord, your humble servant; Sir Paul, yours. The finest night!

Lady Froth. My dear, Mr. Brisk and I have been stargazing, I don't know how long.

Sir Paul. Does it not tire your ladyship? Are you not weary with looking up?

Lady Froth. Oh no, I love it violently. My dear, you're melancholy.

Lord Froth. No, my dear, I'm but just awake.

Lady Froth. Snuff some of my spirit of hartshorn.*

Lord Froth. I've some of my own, thank you, my dear.

Lady Froth. Well, I swear, Mr. Brisk, you understood astronomy like an old Egyptian.

Brisk. Not comparably to your ladyship! You are the very Cynthia of the skies and queen of stars.

Lady Froth. That's because I have no light but what's by reflection from you, who are the sun.

Brisk. Madam, you have eclipsed me quite, let me perish. I can't answer that.

Lady Froth. No matter. Harkee, shall you and I make an almanac together?

Brisk. With all my soul. You ladyship has made me the

* Smelling salts.

man in't already. I'm so full of the wounds which you have given.*

Lady Froth. Oh, finely taken! I swear now you are even with me. Oh Parnassus, you have an infinite deal of wit.

Sir Paul. So he has, gadsbud, and so has your ladyship.

Enter LADY PLYANT, CARELESS *and* CYNTHIA.

Lady Plyant. You tell me most surprising things. Bless me, who would ever trust a man? Oh, my heart aches for fear they should be all deceitful alike.

Care. You need not fear, madam. You have charms to fix inconstancy itself.

Lady Plyant. Oh dear, you make me blush.

Lord Froth. Come, my dear, shall we take leave of my lord and lady?

Cynth. They'll wait upon your lordship presently.

Lady Froth. Mr. Brisk, my coach shall set you down.

[*A great shriek from the corner of the stage.*]

All. What's the matter?

LADY TOUCHWOOD *runs out* affrighted, *my lord after her,*
like a parson.

Lady Touch. Oh, I'm betrayed. Save me, help me!

Lord Touch. Now what evasion, strumpet?

Lady Touch. Stand off. Let me go. [*Runs out.*]

Lord Touch. Go, and thy own infamy pursue thee. You stare as you were all amazed. I don't wonder at it. But too soon you'll know mine and that woman's shame.

Enter MELLEFONT, *disguised in a parson's habit, and pulling in* MASKWELL.

Mel. Nay, by Heaven you shall be seen. Careless, your hand! Do you hold down your head? Yes, I am your

* In old almanacs the twelve signs of the Zodiac are grouped round the figure of a man, Aries at the head, Pisces at the feet, etc. (Summers).

chaplain. Look in the face of your injured friend, thou wonder of all falsehood.

Lord Touch. Are you silent, monster?

Mel. Good heavens! How I believed and loved this man! Take him hence, for he's a disease to my sight.

Lord Touch. Secure that manifold villain.

[*Servants seize him.*]

Care. Miracle of ingratitude!

[*They carry out MASKWELL, who hangs down his head.*]

Brisk. This is all very surprising, let me perish.

Lady Froth. You know I told you Saturn looked a little more angry than usual.

Lord Touch. We'll think of punishment at leisure, but let me hasten to do justice in rewarding virtue and wronged innocence. Nephew, I hope I have your pardon and Cynthia's?

Mel. We are your lordship's creatures.

Lord Touch. And be each other's comfort. Let me join your hands. Unwearied nights and wishing days attend you both. Mutual love, lasting health, and circling joys tread round each happy year of your long lives.

Let secret villainy from hence be warned:
Howe'er in private mischiefs are conceived,
Torture and shame attend their open birth;
Like vipers in the womb, base treachery lies,
Still gnawing that, whence first it did arise,
No sooner born, but the vile parent dies.*

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

* The young viper was thought to force its way through the bowels of the mother.

EPILOGUE

Spoken by Mrs. Mountfort*

*Could poets but foresee how plays would take,
Then they could tell what epilogues to make,
Whether to thank or blame their audience most.
But that late knowledge does much hazard cost;
Till dice are thrown, there's nothing won, nor lost.
So till the thief has stolen, he cannot know
Whether he shall escape the Law or no.
But poets run much greater hazards far,
Than they who stand their trials at the Bar.
The Law provides a curb for its own fury,
And suffers judges to direct the jury.
But in this court, what difference does appear!
For everyone's both judge and jury here,
Nay, and what's worse, an executioner.
All have a right and title to some part,
Each choosing that in which he has most art.
The dreadful men of learning all confound,
Unless the fable's good, and moral sound.
The visor-masks,† that are in pit and gallery,
Approve, or damn, the repartee and raillery.
The lady critics, who are better read,
Enquire if characters are nicely bred,
If the soft things are penned and spoke with grace.
They judge of action too, and time, and place,
In which we do not doubt but they're discerning,
For that's a kind of assignation learning.*

* The original Lady Froth.

† The women of the town always appeared at the theatre in masks.

*Beaus judge of dress; the wittlings judge of songs;
The cuckoldom, of ancient right, to cits belongs.
Thus poor poets the favour are denied
Even to make exceptions, when they're tried.
'Tis hard that they must every one admit.
Methinks I see some faces in the pit,
Which must of consequence be foes to wit.
You who can judge to sentence may proceed,
But, though he cannot write, let him be freed
At least from their contempt, who cannot read.*

LOVE FOR LOVE

PROLOGUE

Spoken at the Opening of the New House
by Mr. Betterton*

*The husbandman in vain renews his toil
To cultivate each year a hungry soil,
And fondly hopes for rich and generous fruit,
When what should feed the tree devours the root.
The unladen boughs, he sees, bode certain dearth,
Unless transplanted to more kindly earth.
So the poor husbands of the stage, who found
Their labours lost upon ungrateful ground,
This last and only remedy have proved;
And hope new fruit from ancient stocks removed.
Well may they hope, when you so kindly aid,
Well plant a soil which you so rich have made.
As Nature gave the world to man's first age,
So from your bounty we receive this Stage;
The freedom man was born to you've restored,
And to our world such plenty you afford
It seems like Eden, fruitful of its own accord.
But since in Paradise frail flesh gave way,
And when but two were made, both went astray,
Forbear your wonder and the fault forgive,
If in our larger family we grieve
One falling Adam, and one tempted Eve.†
We who remain would gratefully repay
What our endeavours can, and bring, this day,*

* In 1695 the best of the Drury Lane actors seceded and opened a theatre of their own in Lincoln's Inn Fields. *Love for Love* was their first play.

† Joseph Williams and Susanna Mountfort, who had returned to Drury Lane.

*The firstfruit offering of a virgin play.
We hope there's something that may please each taste,
And though of homely fare we make the feast,
Yet you will find variety at least.
There's humour, which for cheerful friends we got,
And for the thinking party there's a plot.
We've something too to gratify ill nature,
If there be any here, and that is satire.
Though satire scarce dares grin, 'tis grown so mild,
Or only shows its teeth, as if it smiled.
As asses thistles, poets mumble wit,
And dare not bite for fear of being bit.
They hold their pens, as swords are held by fools,
And are afraid to use their own edge-tools.
Since the Plain-Dealer's scenes of manly rage,*
Not one has dared to lash this crying age.
This time the poet owns the bold essay,
Yet hopes there's no ill-manners in his play;
And he declares by me he has designed
Affront to none, but frankly speaks his mind.
And should the ensuing scenes not chance to hit,
He offers but this one excuse—'twas writ
Before your late encouragement of wit.*

* Wycherley's comedy, *The Plain-Dealer*, had been produced in 1671.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

SIR SAMPSON LEGEND, father to VALENTINE and BEN.

VALENTINE, fallen under his father's displeasure by his expensive way of living, in love with ANGELICA.

SCANDAL, his friend, a free speaker.

TATTLE, a half-witted beau, vain of his amours, yet valuing himself for secrecy.

BEN, SIR SAMPSON's younger son, half home-bred, and half sea-bred, designed to marry Miss PRUE.

FORESIGHT, an illiterate old fellow, peevish and positive, superstitious, and pretending to understand astrology, palmistry, physiognomy, omens, dreams, etc., uncle to ANGELICA.

JEREMY, servant to VALENTINE.

TRAPLAND, a scrivener.

BUCKRAM, a lawyer.

ANGELICA, niece to FORESIGHT, of a considerable fortune in her own hands.

MRS. FORESIGHT, second wife to FORESIGHT.

MRS. FRAIL, sister to MRS. FORESIGHT, a woman of the town.

Miss PRUE, daughter to FORESIGHT by a former wife, a silly, awkward country girl.

NURSE to Miss.

JENNY.

A Steward, Officers, Sailors, and several Servants.

The SCENE—in London.

LOVE FOR LOVE

ACT I

Scene I—VALENTINE *in his chamber reading*. JEREMY *waiting. Several books upon the table.*

Val. Jeremy.

Fer. Sir.

Val. Here, take away. I'll walk a turn, and digest what I have read.

Fer. [*aside, and taking away the books*]. You'll grow devilish fat upon this paper diet.

Val. And, d'ye hear, go you to breakfast. There's a page doubled down in Epictetus that is a feast for an emperor.

Fer. Was Epictetus a real cook, or did he only write receipts?

Val. Read, read, sirrah, and refine your appetite. Learn to live upon instruction; feast your mind, and mortify your flesh. Read, and take your nourishment in at your eyes; shut up your mouth, and chew the cud of understanding. So Epictetus advises.

Fer. Oh Lord! I have heard much of him, when I waited upon a gentleman at Cambridge. Pray what was that Epictetus?

Val. A very rich man—not worth a groat.

Fer. Humph, and so he has made a very fine feast, where there is nothing to be eaten.

Val. Yes.

Fer. Sir, you're a gentleman, and probably understand this fine feeding. But if you please I had rather be at board wages. Does your Epictetus, or your Seneca here, or any of

these poor rich rogues, teach you how to pay your debts without money? Will they shut up the mouths of your creditors? Will Plato be bail for you? Or Diogenes, because he understands confinement and lived in a tub, go to prison for you? 'Slife, sir, what do you mean, to mew yourself up here with three or four musty books in commendation of starving and poverty?

Val. Why, sirrah, I have no money, you know it; and therefore resolve to rail at all that have. And in that I but follow the examples of the wisest and wittiest men in all ages, these poets and philosophers whom you naturally hate for just such another reason—because they abound in sense, and you are a fool.

Fer. Aye, sir, I am a fool, I know it. And yet, Heaven help me, I'm poor enough to be a wit. But I was always a fool, when I told you what your expenses would bring you to, your coaches and your liveries, your treats and your balls, your being in love with a lady that did not care a farthing for you in your prosperity, and keeping company with wits that cared for nothing but your prosperity, and now when you are poor, hate you as much as they do one another.

Val. Well, and now I am poor I have an opportunity to be revenged on them all. I'll pursue Angelica with more love than ever, and appear more notoriously her admirer in this restraint than when I openly rivalled the rich fops that made court to her. So shall my poverty be a mortification to her pride, and perhaps make her compassionate the love which has principally reduced me to this lowness of fortune. And for the wits, I'm sure I am in a condition to be even with them.

Fer. Nay, your condition is pretty even with theirs, that's the truth on't.

Val. I'll take some of their trade out of their hands.

Fer. Now Heaven of mercy continue the tax upon paper! You don't mean to write?

Val. Yes, I do. I'll write a play.

Fer. Hem! Sir, if you please to give me a small certificate of three lines—only to certify those whom it may concern that the bearer hereof, Jeremy Fetch by name, has for the space of seven years truly and faithfully served Valentine Legend, Esq., and that he is not now turned away for any misdemeanour, but does voluntarily dismiss his master from any future authority over him.

Val. No, sirrah, you shall live with me still.

Fer. Sir, it's impossible. I may die with you, starve with you, or be damned with your works; but to live even three days, the life of a play,* I no more expect it than to be canonised for a muse after my decease.

Val. You are witty, you rogue. I shall want your help. I'll have you learn to make couplets to tag the ends of acts. D'ye hear, get the maids to crambo† in an evening, and learn the knack of rhyming. You may arrive at the height of a song sent by an unknown hand, or a chocolate-house lampoon.

Fer. But, sir, is this the way to recover your father's favour? Why, Sir Sampson will be irreconcilable. If your younger brother should come from sea, he'd never look upon you again. You're undone, sir; you're ruined; you won't have a friend left in the world, if you turn poet. Ah, pox confound that Will's coffee-house!‡ It has ruined more young men than the Royal Oak Lottery§. Nothing thrives

* The worst play was generally allowed to run three days, as the third night was the author's benefit.

† Capping verses.

‡ Where Dryden reigned. It "was situated at No. 1, Bow Street, at the corner of Russell Street, and was called after its proprietor, William Urwin." (Ewald.)

§ An annual lottery for the benefit of the Royal Fishing Company.

that belongs to 't. The man of the house would have been an alderman by this time with half the trade, if he had set up in the city. For my part, I never sit at the door that I don't get double the stomach that I do at a horse race. The air upon Banstead Downs* is nothing to it for a whetter. Yet I never see it, but the spirit of famine appears to me, sometimes like a decayed porter, worn out with pimping and carrying *billets doux* and songs, not like other porters for hire, but for the jest's sake; now like a thin chairman, melted down to half his proportion with carrying a poet upon tick to visit some great fortune, and his fare to be paid him, like the wages of sin, either at the day of marriage, or the day of death.

Val. Very well, sir. Can you proceed?

Fer. Sometimes like a bilked bookseller, with a meagre terrified countenance, that looks as if he had written for himself, or were resolved to turn author and bring the rest of his brethren into the same condition; and lastly in the form of a worn-out punk, with verses in her hand, which her vanity had preferred to settlements, without a whole tatter to her tail, but as ragged as one of the muses, or as if she were carrying her linen to the paper mill to be converted into folio books of warning to all young maids not to prefer poetry to good sense, or lying in the arms of a needy wit before the embraces of a wealthy fool.

Enter SCANDAL.

Scan. What, Jeremy holding forth?

Val. The rogue has, with all the wit he could muster up, been declaiming against wit.

Scan. Aye? Why, then I'm afraid Jeremy has wit, for wherever it is, it's always contriving its own ruin.

Fer. Why, so I have been telling my master, sir. Mr.

* Epsom Downs.

Scandal, for Heaven's sake, sir, try if you can dissuade him from turning poet.

Scan. Poet! He shall turn soldier first, and rather depend upon the outside of his head than the lining. Why, what the devil! Has not your poverty made you enemies enough? Must you needs show your wit to get more?

Fer. Aye, more indeed. For who cares for anybody that has more wit than himself?

Scan. Jeremy speaks like an oracle. Don't you see how worthless great men and dull rich rogues avoid a witty man of small fortune? Why, he looks like a writ of enquiry into their titles and estates, and seems commissioned by Heaven to seize the better half.

Val. Therefore I would rail in my writings, and be revenged.

Scan. Rail? At whom? The whole world? Impotent and vain! Who would die a martyr to sense in a country where the religion is folly? You may stand at bay for a while; but when the full cry is against you, you shan't have fair play for your life. If you can't be fairly run down by the hounds you will be treacherously shot by the huntsmen. No, turn pimp, flatterer, quack, lawyer, parson, be chaplain to an atheist, or stallion to an old woman, anything but poet. A modern poet is worse, more servile, timorous, and fawning than any I have named. Without you could retrieve the ancient honours of the name, recall the stage of Athens, and be allowed the force of open honest satire.

Val. You are as inveterate against our poets as if your character had been lately exposed upon the stage. Nay, I am not violently bent upon the trade. [*One knocks.*] Jeremy, see who's there. [*JEREMY goes to the door.*] But tell me what you would have me do? What do the world say of me and of my forced confinement?

Scan. The world behaves itself, as it uses to do on such occasions. Some pity you and condemn your father, others excuse him and blame you. Only the ladies are merciful and wish you well, since love and pleasurable expense have been your greatest faults.

Enter JEREMY.

Val. How now?

Fer. Nothing new, sir. I have dispatched some half a dozen duns with as much dexterity as a hungry judge does causes at dinner-time.

Val. What answer have you given 'em?

Scan. Patience, I suppose, the old receipt.

Fer. No, faith, sir. I have put 'em off so long with patience and forbearance and other fair words that I was forced now to tell 'em in plain downright English——

Val. What?

Fer. That they should be paid.

Val. When?

Fer. To-morrow.

Val. And how the devil do you mean to keep your word?

Fer. Keep it? Not at all. It has been so very much stretched, that I reckon it will break of course by to-morrow, and nobody be surprised at the matter. [*Knocking.*] Again! Sir, if you don't like my negotiation, will you be pleased to answer these yourself.

Val. See who they are. [*Exit JEREMY.*] By this, Scandal, you may see what it is to be great. Secretaries of State, presidents of the council, and generals of an army lead just such a life as I do, have just such crowds of visitants in a morning all soliciting of past promises, which are but a civiller sort of duns, that lay claim to voluntary debts.

Scan. And you, like a true great man, having engaged their attendance, and promised more than ever you in-

tended to perform, are more perplexed to find evasions, than you would be to invent the honest means of keeping your word and gratifying your creditors.

Val. Scandal, learn to spare your friends, and do not provoke your enemies. This liberty of your tongue will one day bring a confinement on your body, my friend.

Re-enter JEREMY.

Fer. Oh, sir, there's Trapland, the scrivener, with two suspicious fellows like lawful pads, that would knock a man down with pocket-tipstaves,* and there's your father's steward, and the nurse with one of your children from Twitnam.

Val. Pox on her, could she find no other time to fling my sins in my face? Here, give her this [*gives money*] and bid her trouble me no more. A thoughtless two-handed† whore! She knows my condition well enough, and might have overlaid the child a fortnight ago, if she had had any forecast in her.

Scan. What, is it bouncing Margery, with my godson?

Fer. Yes, sir.

Scan. My blessing to the boy, with this token [*gives money*] of my love. And, d'ye hear, bid Margery put more flocks‡ in her bed, shift twice a week, and not work so hard, that she may not smell so vigorously. I shall take the air shortly.

Val. Scandal, don't spoil my boy's milk. [*To JEREMY.*] Bid Trapland come in [*Exit JEREMY.*] If I can give that Cerberus a sop, I shall be at rest for one day.

Enter TRAPLAND with JEREMY.

Val. Oh, Mr. Trapland, my old friend! Welcome.

* The bailiff's badge of office.

† Strapping.

‡ Woollen refuse, used for stuffing mattresses.

Jeremy, a chair quickly. A bottle of sack and a toast. Fly. A chair first.

Trap. A good morning to you, Mr. Valentine, and to you, Mr. Scandal.

Scan. The morning's a very good morning, if you don't spoil it.

Val. Come, sit you down, you know his way.

Trap. [*sits*]. There is a debt, Mr. Valentine, of fifteen hundred pounds of pretty long standing.

Val. I cannot talk about business with a thirsty palate. [*To JEREMY.*] Sirrah, the sack.

Trap. And I desire to know what course you have taken for the payment?

Val. Faith and troth, I am heartily glad to see you. My service to you. Fill, fill, to honest Mr. Trapland, fuller.

Trap. Hold, sweetheart. This is not to our business. My service to you, Mr. Scandal. [*Drinks.*] I have forborne as long——

Val. Tother glass, and then we'll talk. Fill, Jeremy.

Trap. No more, in truth. I have forborne, I say——

Val. [*to JEREMY.*] Sirrah, fill when I bid you. [*To TRAPLAND.*] And how does your handsome daughter? Come, a good husband to her. [*Drinks.*]

Trap. Thank you. I have been out of this money——

Val. Drink first. Scandal, why do you not drink?

[*They drink.*]

Trap. And, in short, I can be put off no longer.

Val. I was much obliged to you for your supply. It did me signal service in my necessity. But you delight in doing good. Scandal, drink to me my friend Trapland's health. An honest man lives not, nor one more ready to serve his friend in distress, though I say it to his face. Come, fill each man his glass.

Scan. What, I know Trapland has been a whoremaster,

and loves a wench still. You never knew a whoremaster that was not an honest fellow.

Trap. Fie, Mr. Scandal, you never knew——

Scan. What don't I know? I know the buxom black widow in the Poultry.* Eight hundred pounds a year jointure, and twenty thousand pounds in money. Ah ha! old Trapland.

Val. Say you so, i'faith? Come, we'll remember the widow. I know whereabouts you are. Come, to the widow.

Trap. No more, indeed.

Val. What, the widow's health! [*To JEREMY.*] Give it him. Off with it. [*They drink.*] A lovely girl, i'faith, black sparkling eyes, soft pouting ruby lips! Better sealing there than a bond for a million, ha?

Trap. No, no, there's no such thing. We'd better mind our business. You're a wag.

Val. No, faith, we'll mind the widow's business. Fill again. Pretty, round, heaving breasts, a Barbary shape,† and a jut with her bum would stir an Anchorite! And the prettiest foot! Oh, if a man could but fasten his eyes to her feet, as they steal in and out, and play at Bo-peep‡ under her petticoats, ah, Mr. Trapland?

Trap. Verily, give me a glass. You're a wag, and here's to the widow. [*Drinks.*]

Scan. [*to VALENTINE.*] He begins to chuckle; ply him close, or he'll relapse into a dun.

Enter OFFICER.

Officer. By your leave, gentlemen. Mr. Trapland, if we must do our office, tell us. We have half a dozen gentlemen to arrest in Pall Mall and Covent Garden, and if we

* Between Cheapside and Cornhill.

† i.e., as graceful as a Barbary horse.

‡ The nursery game of peeping out and crying *bo!*

don't make haste the chairmen will be abroad, and block up the chocolate houses, and then our labour's lost.

Trap. Udso, that's true. Mr. Valentine, I love mirth, but business must be done. Are you ready to——

Fer. Sir, your father's steward says he comes to make proposals concerning your debts.

Val. Bid him come in. Mr. Trapland, send away your officer. You shall have an answer presently.

Trap. Mr. Snap, stay within call. [*Exit OFFICER.*]

Enter STEWARD who whispers to VALENTINE.

Scan. Here's a dog now, a traitor in his wine! [*To TRAPLAND.*] Sirrah, refund the sack. Jeremy fetch him some warm water, or I'll rip up his stomach, and go the shortest way to his conscience.

Trap. Mr. Scandal, you are uncivil. I did not value your sack, but you cannot expect it again, when I have drunk it.

Scan. And how do you expect to have your money again, when a gentleman has spent it?

Val. [*to STEWARD*]. You need say no more. I understand the conditions. They are very hard, but my necessity is very pressing. I agree to 'em. Take Mr. Trapland with you, and let him draw the writing. Mr. Trapland, you know this man. He shall satisfy you.

Trap. Sincerely, I am loth to be thus pressing, but my necessity——

Val. No apology, good Mr. Scrivener. You shall be paid.

Trap. I hope you forgive me. My business requires——

[*Exeunt STEWARD, TRAPLAND and JEREMY.*]

Scan. He begs pardon like a hangman at an execution.

Val. But I have got a reprieve.

Scan. I am surprised. What, does your father relent?

Val. No: he has sent me the hardest conditions in the world. You have heard of a booby brother of mine, that

was sent to sea three years ago? This brother, my father hears, is landed, whereupon he very affectionately sends me word, if I will make a deed of conveyance of my right to his estate after his death, to my younger brother, he will immediately furnish me with four thousand pounds to pay my debts and make my fortune. This was once proposed before, and I refused it, but the present impatience of my creditors for their money, and my own impatience of confinement and absence from Angelica force me to consent.

Scan. A very desperate demonstration of your love to Angelica; and I think she has never given you any assurance of hers.

Val. You know her temper; she never gave me any great reason either for hope or despair.

Scan. Women of her airy temper, as they seldom think before they act, so they rarely give us any light to guess at what they mean. But you have little reason to believe that a woman of this age, who has had an indifference for you in your prosperity, will fall in love with your ill-fortune. Besides, Angelica has a great fortune of her own, and great fortunes either expect another great fortune, or a fool.

Enter JEREMY.

Fer. More misfortunes, sir.

Val. What, another dun?

Fer. No, sir, but Mr. Tattle is come to wait upon you.

Val. Well, I can't help it. You must bring him up; he knows I don't go abroad. *[Exit JEREMY.]*

Scan. Pox on him, I'll be gone.

Val. No, prithee, stay. Tattle and you should never be asunder; you are light and shadow, and show one another. He is perfectly thy reverse both in humour and understanding, and as you set up for defamation, he is a mender of reputations.

Scan. A mender of reputations! Aye, just as he is a keeper of secrets, another virtue that he sets up for in the same manner. For the rogue will speak aloud in the posture of a whisper, and deny a woman's name, while he gives you the marks of her person; he will forswear receiving a letter from her, and at the same time show you her hand in the superscription. And yet perhaps he has counterfeited the hand too and sworn to a truth, but he hopes not to be believed, and refuses the reputation of a lady's favour, as a doctor says 'No' to a bishopric, only that it may be granted him. In short, he is a public professor of secrecy, and makes proclamation that he holds private intelligence. He's here.

Enter TATTLE.

Tat. Valentine, good morrow; Scandal, I am yours, that is, when you speak well of me.

Scan. That is, when I am yours; for while I am my own, or anybody's else, that will never happen.

Tat. How inhumane!

Val. Why, Tattle, you need not be much concerned at anything that he says, for to converse with Scandal is to play at Losing Loadum*; you must lose a good name to him before you can win it for yourself.

Tat. But how barbarous that is, and how unfortunate for him, that the world shall think the better of any person for his calumination! I thank Heaven it has always been a part of my character to handle the reputations of others very tenderly indeed.

Scan. Aye, such rotten reputations as you have to deal with are to be handled tenderly indeed.

Tat. Nay, but why rotten? Why should you say rotten, when you know not the persons of whom you speak? How cruel that is!

* A card game in which the object was to lose tricks.

Scan. Not know 'em? Why, thou never hadst to do with anybody that did not stink to all the town.

Tat. Ha, ha, ha! Nay, now you make a jest of it indeed. For there is nothing more known than that nobody knows anything of that nature of me. As I hope to be saved, Valentine, I never exposed a woman since I knew what woman was.

Val. And yet you have conversed with several?

Tat. To be free with you, I have. I don't care if I own that. Nay, more—I'm going to say a bold word now—I never could meddle with a woman that had to do with anybody else.

Scan. How!

Val. Nay, faith, I'm apt to believe him. Except her husband, Tattle.

Tat. Oh, that——

Scan. What think you of that noble commoner, Mrs. Drab?

Tat. Pooh, I know Madam Drab has made her brags in three or four places that I said this and that, and writ to her, and did I know not what. But, upon my reputation, she did me wrong. Well, well, that was malice. But I know the bottom of it. She was bribed to that by one we all know—a man too. Only to bring me into disgrace with a certain woman of quality——

Scan. Whom we all know.

Tat. No matter for that. Yes, yes, everybody knows. No doubt on't, everybody knows my secrets. But I soon satisfied the lady of my innocence. For I told her, Madam, says I, there are some persons who make it their business to tell stories, and say this and that of one and tother, and everything in the world, and, says I, if your Grace——

Scan. Grace!

Tat. Oh Lord, what have I said? My unlucky tongue!

Val. Ha, ha, ha!

Scan. Why, Tattle, thou hast more impudence than one can in reason expect. I shall have an esteem for thee. Well, and ha, ha, ha! well, go on. And what did you say to her Grace?

Val. I confess this is something extraordinary.

Tat. Not a word, as I hope to be saved. An arrant *lapsus lingue*. Come, let's talk of something else.

Val. Well, but how did you acquit yourself?

Tat. Pooh, pooh, nothing at all, I only rallied with you. A woman of ordinary rank was a little jealous of me, and I told her something or other, faith, I know not what. Come, let's talk of something else. [*Hums a song.*]

Scan. Hang him, let him alone. He has a mind we should enquire.

Tat. Valentine, I supped last night with your mistress, and her uncle, old Foresight. I think your father lies at Foresight's?

Val. Yes.

Tat. Upon my soul Angelica's a fine woman, and so is Mrs. Foresight, and her sister, Mrs. Frail.

Scan. Yes, Mrs. Frail is a very fine woman; we all know her.

Tat. Oh, that is not fair.

Scan. What?

Tat. To tell.

Scan. To tell what? Why, what do you know of Mrs. Frail?

Tat. Who, I? Upon honour I don't know whether she be man or woman, but by the smoothness of her chin, and roundness of her hips.

Scan. No?

Tat. No.

Scan. She says otherwise.

Tat. Impossible!

Scan. Yes, faith. Ask Valentine else.

Tat. Why then, as I hope to be saved, I believe a woman only obliges a man to secrecy that she may have the pleasure of telling herself.

Scan. No doubt on't. Well, but has she done you wrong, or no? You have had her, ha?

Tat. Though I have more honour than to tell first, I have more manners than to contradict what a lady has declared.

Scan. Well, you own it?

Tat. I am strangely surprised. Yes, yes, I can't deny it, if she taxes me with it.

Scan. She'll be here by and by. She sees Valentine every morning.

Tat. How?

Val. She does me the favour. I mean—of a visit sometimes. I did not think she had granted more to anybody.

Scan. Nor I, faith. But Tattle does not use to belie a lady; it is contrary to his character. How one may be deceived in a woman, Valentine!

Tat. Nay, what do you mean, gentlemen?

Scan. I'm resolved I'll ask her.

Tat. Oh, barbarous! Why did you not tell me.

Scan. No, you told us.

Tat. And bid me ask Valentine?

Val. What did I say? I hope you won't bring me to confess an answer, when you never asked me the question.

Tat. But, gentlemen, this is the most inhumane proceeding.

Val. Nay, if you have known Scandal thus long, and cannot avoid such a palpable decoy as this was, the ladies have a fine time, whose reputations are in your keeping.

Enter JEREMY.

Jer. Sir, Mrs. Frail has sent to know if you are stirring.

Val. Show her up when she comes. [Exit JEREMY.]

Tat. I'll be gone.

Val. You'll meet her.

Tat. Is there not a back way?

Val. If there were, you have more discretion than to give Scandal such an advantage. Why, your running away will prove all that he can tell her.

Tat. Scandal, you will not be so ungenerous. Oh, I shall lose my reputation of secrecy for ever. I shall never be received but upon public days, and my visits will never be admitted beyond a drawing-room. I shall never see a bed-chamber again, never be locked in a closet, nor run behind a screen, or under a table, never be distinguished among the waiting-women by the name of trusty Mr. Tattle more. You will not be so cruel?

Val. Scandal, have pity on him. He'll yield to any conditions.

Tat. Any, any terms.

Scan. Come then, sacrifice half a dozen women of good reputation to me presently. Come, where are you familiar? And see that they are women of quality too, the first quality.

Tat. 'Tis very hard. Won't a baronet's lady pass?

Scan. No, nothing under a Right Honourable.

Tat. Oh, inhumane! You don't expect their names?

Scan. No, their titles shall serve.

Tat. Alas! that's the same thing. Pray spare me their titles. I'll describe their persons.

Scan. Well, begin then. But take notice, if you are so ill a painter that I cannot know the person by your picture of her, you must be condemned, like other bad painters, to write the name at the bottom.

Tat. Well, first then——

Enter MRS. FRAIL.

Tat. Oh, unfortunate! She's come already. Will you have patience till another time? I'll double the number.

Scan. Well, on that condition. Take heed you don't fail me.

Mrs. Frail. I shall get a fine reputation by coming to see fellows in a morning. Scandal, you devil, are you here too? Oh, Mr. Tattle, everything is safe with you, we know.

Scan. Tattle?

Tat. Mum. Oh, madam, you do me too much honour.

Val. Well, Lady Galloper, how does Angelica?

Mrs. Frail. Angelica? Manners!

Val. What, you will allow an absent lover——

Mrs. Frail. No, I'll allow a lover present with his mistress to be particular. But otherwise I think his passion ought to give place to his manners.

Val. But what if he has more passion than manners?

Mrs. Frail. Then let him marry and reform.

Val. Marriage indeed may qualify the fury of his passion, but it very rarely mends a man's manners.

Mrs. Frail. You are the most mistaken in the world; there is no creature perfectly civil, but a husband. For in a little time he grows only rude to his wife, and that is the highest good breeding, for it begets his civility to other people. Well, I'll tell you news, but I suppose you hear your brother Benjamin is landed, and my brother Foresight's daughter is come out of the country. I assure you there's a match talked of by the old people. Well, if he be but as great a sea beast as she is a land monster, we shall have a most amphibious breed. The progeny will be all otters. He has been bred at sea, and she has never been out of the country.

Val. Pox take 'em, their conjunction bodes me no good, I'm sure.

Mrs. Frail. Now you talk of conjunction, my brother Foresight has cast both their nativities, and prognosticates an admiral and an eminent justice of the peace to be the issue-male of their two bodies. 'Tis the most superstitious old fool! He would have persuaded me that this was an unlucky day, and would not let me come abroad. But I invented a dream, and sent him to Artemidorus* for interpretation, and so stole out to see you. Well, and what will you give me now? Come, I must have something.

Val. Step into the next room, and I'll give you something.

Scan. Ay, we'll all give you something.

Mrs. Frail. Well, what will you all give me?

Val. Mine's a secret.

Mrs. Frail. I thought you would give me something that would be a trouble to you to keep.

Val. And Scandal shall give you a good name.

Mrs. Frail. That's more than he has for himself. And what will you give me, Mr. Tattle?

Tat. I? My soul, madam.

Mrs. Frail. Pooh! No, I thank you, I have enough to do to take care of my own. Well, but I'll come and see you one of these mornings. I hear you have a great many pictures.

Tat. I have a pretty good collection at your service, some originals.

Scan. Hang him, he has nothing but the Seasons and the Twelve Cæsars, paltry copies, and the Five Senses,† as ill-represented as they are in himself; and he himself is the only original you will see there.

Mrs. Frail. Aye, but I hear he has a closet of beauties.

* Artemidorus Daldianus, the classical authority on the interpretation of dreams.

† Cheap prints. The Twelve Cæsars adorn the walls of Hogarth's brothel in *The Rake's Progress*.

Scan. Yes, all that have done him favours, if you will believe him.

Mrs. Frail. Aye, let me see those, Mr. Tattle.

Tat. Oh, madam, those are sacred to love and contemplation. No man but the painter and myself was ever blessed with the sight.

Mrs. Frail. Well, but a woman——

Tat. Nor woman, till she consented to have her picture there too, for then she's obliged to keep the secret.

Scan. No, no: come to me if you'd see pictures.

Mrs. Frail. You?

Scan. Yes, faith, I can show you your own picture, and most of your acquaintances to the life, and as like as at Kneller's.

Mrs. Frail. Oh, lying creature! Valentine, does not he lie? I can't believe a word he says.

Val. No, indeed, he speaks truth now. For as Tattle has pictures of all that have granted him favours, he has the pictures of all that have refused him—if satires, descriptions, characters and lampoons are pictures.

Scan. Yes, mine are most in black and white. And yet there are some set out in their true colours, both men and women. I can show you pride, folly, affectation, wantonness, inconstancy, covetousness, dissimulation, malice and ignorance, all in one piece. Then I can show you lying, foppery, vanity, cowardice, bragging, lechery, impotence and ugliness in another piece. And yet one of these is a celebrated beauty, and the other a professed beau. I have paintings too, some pleasant enough.

Mrs. Frail. Come, let's hear 'em.

Scan. Why, I have a beau in a bagnio,* cupping for a complexion and sweating for a shape.

Mrs. Frail. So.

* Turkish bath.

Scan. Then I have a lady burning brandy in a cellar with a hackney coachman.

Mrs. Frail. Oh, devil! Well, but that story is not true.

Scan. I have some hieroglyphics too. I have a lawyer with a hundred hands, two heads, and but one face; a divine with two faces and one head; and I have a soldier with his brains in his belly, and his heart where his head should be.

Mrs. Frail. And no head?

Scan. No head.

Mrs. Frail. Pooh, this is all invention. Have you ne'er a poet?

Scan. Yes, I have a poet weighing words, and selling praise for praise, and a critic picking his pocket. I have another large piece too representing a school, where there are huge proportioned critics, with long wigs, laced coats, Steinkirk cravats,* and terrible faces, with cat-calls† in their hands, and horn-books‡ about their necks. I have many more of this kind, very well painted, as you shall see.

Mrs. Frail. Well, I'll come, if it be but to disprove you.

Enter JEREMY.

Jer. Sir, here's the Steward again from your father.

Val. I'll come to him. Will you give me leave? I'll wait on you again presently.

Mrs. Frail. No, I'll begone. Come, who squires me to the Exchange?§ I must call my sister Foresight there.

Scan. I will: I have a mind to your sister.

Mrs. Frail. Civil!

* At the battle of Steenkirke, August 3rd, 1692, the French officers did not have time to fasten their neckties and the loose cravat subsequently became fashionable.

† A whistle appropriated to the hissing of bad plays.

‡ A card with the alphabet protected by a plate of translucent horn.

§ The New Exchange was a bazaar on the south side of the Strand.

Tat. I will: because I have a *tendre* for your ladyship.

Mrs. Frail. That's somewhat the better reason to my opinion.

Scan. Well, if Tattle entertains you, I have the better opportunity to engage your sister.

Val. Tell Angelica I am about making hard conditions to come abroad, and be at liberty to see her.

Scan. I'll give an account of you and your proceedings. If indiscretion be a sign of love, you are the most a lover of anybody that I know. You fancy that parting with your estate will help you to your mistress. In my mind he is a thoughtless adventurer,

Who hopes to purchase wealth by selling land,
Or win a mistress with a losing hand. [Exeunt.

ACT II

Scene I—*A Room in FORESIGHT'S House. FORESIGHT and SERVANT discovered.*

Fore. Hey day! What, are all the women of my family abroad? Is not my wife come home, nor my sister, nor my daughter?

Serv. No, sir.

Fore. Mercy on us, what can be the meaning of it? Sure the moon is in all her fortitudes.* Is my niece Angelica at home?

Serv. Yes, sir.

Fore. I believe you lie, sir.

Serv. Sir?

Fore. I say you lie, sir. It is impossible that anything should be as I would have it; for I was born, sir, when the crab was ascending, and all my affairs go backward.

* The astrological term for anything which increases the influence of a planet.

Serv. I can't tell indeed, sir.

Fore. No, I know you can't, sir. But I can tell, and fore-tell, sir.

Enter NURSE.

Fore. Nurse, where's your young mistress?

Nurse. Wee'st heart, I know not. They're none of 'em come home yet. Poor child, I warrant she's fond o' seeing the town. Marry, pray Heaven they ha' given her any dinner. Good lack-a-day! Ha, ha, ha! Oh strange! I'll vow and swear now. Ha, ha, ha! Marry and did you ever see the like?

Fore. Why, how now, what's the matter?

Nurse. Pray Heaven send your worship good luck! Marry and Amen with all my heart, for you have put on one stocking with the wrong side outward.

Fore. Ha, how? Faith and troth I'm glad of it, and so I have. That may be good luck in troth. In troth it may, very good luck. Nay, I have had some omens. I got out of bed backwards too this morning, without premeditation. Pretty good that too. But then I stumbled coming downstairs, and met a weasel.* Bad omens those! Some bad, some good, our lives are chequered. Mirth and sorrow, want and plenty, night and day make up our time. But, in troth, I am pleased at my stocking, very well pleased at my stocking. [*Enter ANGELICA.*] Oh, here's my niece! Sirrah, go tell Sir Sampson Legend I'll wait on him if he's at leisure. 'Tis now three o'clock, a very good hour for business; Mercury governs this hour. [*Exit SERVANT.*]

Ang. Is it not a good hour for pleasure too? Uncle, pray lend me your coach. Mine's out of order.

Fore. What, would you be gadding too? Sure all females are mad to-day. It is of evil portent, and bodes mischief to

* The weasel might well have been a witch's familiar.

the master of a family. I remember an old phophecy written by Messahalal the Arabian,* and thus translated by a reverend Buckinghamshire bard.†

When housewives all the house forsake,
And leave good man to brew and bake,
Withouten guile, then be it said,
That house doth stond upon its head;
And when the head is set in grond,
Ne marl if it be fruitful fond.

Fruitful, the head fruitful, that bodes horns; the fruit of the head is horns. Dear niece, stay at home, for by the head of the house is meant the husband. The prophecy needs no explanation.

Ang. Well, but I can neither make you a cuckold, uncle, by going abroad, nor secure you from being one by staying at home.

Fore. Yes, yes: while there's one woman left the prophecy is not in full force.

Ang. But my inclinations are in force. I have a mind to go abroad, and if you won't lend me your coach, I'll take a hackney or a chair, and leave you to erect a scheme, and find who's in conjunction with your wife. Why don't you keep her at home, if you're jealous of her when she's abroad? You know my aunt is a little retrograde, as you call it, in her nature. Uncle, I'm afraid you are not lord of the ascendant. Ha, ha, ha!

Fore. Well, jill-flirt, you are very pert, and always ridiculing that celestial science.

Ang. Nay, uncle, don't be angry. If you are I'll reap up all your false prophecies, ridiculous dreams, and idle divinations. I'll swear you are a nuisance to the neighbourhood. What a bustle did you keep against the last invisible

* Ma Sha Allah, a Jewish astrologer of the ninth century.

† John Mason (1646?–1694), Vicar of Stantonbury, Bucks.

eclipse, laying in provision as 'twere for a siege! What a world of fire and candle, matches and tinderboxes did you purchase! One would have thought we were ever after to live underground, or at least making a voyage to Greenland to inhabit there all the dark season.

Fore. Why, you malapert slut——

Ang. Will you lend me your coach, or I'll go on? Nay, I'll declare how you prophesied popery was coming, only because the butler had mislaid some of the Apostle spoons, and thought they were lost. Away went religion and spoon-meat together. Indeed, uncle, I'll indite you for a wizard.

Fore. How, hussy? Was there ever such a provoking minx?

Nurse. Oh, merciful Father, how she talks!

Ang. Yes, I can make oath of your unlawful midnight practices, you and the old nurse there.

Nurse. Marry, Heaven defend. I at midnight practices! Oh Lord, what's here to do? I in unlawful doings with my master's worship! Why, did you ever hear the like now? Sir, did ever I do anything of your midnight concerns but warm your bed, and tuck you up, and set the candle and your tobacco box and your urinal by you, and now and then rub the soles of your feet? Oh Lord, I!

Ang. Yes, I saw you together through the keyhole of the closet one night, like Saul and the witch of Endor, turning the sieve and shears,* and pricking your thumbs, to write poor innocent servants' names in blood about a little nutmeg grater, which she had forgot in the caudle-cup. Nay, I know something worse, if I would speak of it.

Fore. I defy you, hussy; but I'll remember this, I'll be revenged on you, cockatrice; I'll hamper you. You have your fortune in your own hands, but I'll find a way to

* A form of divination much in use in Scotland.

make your lover, your prodigal, spendthrift gallant, Valentine, pay for all, I will.

Ang. Will you? I care not, but all shall out then. Look to 't, Nurse. I can bring witness that you have a great unnatural teat under your left arm, and he another, and that you suckle a young devil in the shape of a tabby cat by turns, I can.

Nurse. A teat, a teat, I an unnatural teat! Oh, the false slanderous thing! Feel, feel here, if I have anything but like another Christian. [Crying.]

Fore. I will have patience, since it is the will of the stars I should be thus tormented. This is the effect of the malicious conjunctions and oppositions in the third house of my nativity. There the curse of kindred was foretold. But I will have my doors locked up. I'll punish you. Not a man shall enter my house.

Ang. Do, uncle, lock 'em up quickly before my aunt come home. You'll have a letter for alimony to-morrow morning. But let me be gone first, and then let no man-kind come near the house, but converse with spirits and the celestial signs: the bull, and the ram, and the goat. Bless me! there are a great many horned beasts among the twelve signs, uncle. But cuckolds go to heaven.

For. But there's but one virgin among the twelve signs, spitfire, but one virgin.

Ang. Nor there had not been that one, if she had had to do with anything but astrologers, uncle. That makes my aunt go abroad.

Fore. How, how? Is that the reason? Come, you know something. Tell me, and I'll forgive you. Do, good niece. Come, you shall have my coach and horses. Faith and troth, you shall. Does my wife complain? Come, I know women tell one another. She is young and sanguine, has a wanton hazel eye, and was born under Gemini, which may

incline her to society; she has a mole upon her lip, with a moist palm, and an open liberality on the mount of Venus

Ang. Ha, ha, ha!

Fore. Do you laugh? Well, gentlewoman, I'll—— But come, be a good girl. Don't perplex your poor uncle. Tell me. Won't you speak? Odd I'll——

Enter SERVANT.

Serv. Sir Sampson is coming down to wait upon you.

Ang. Goodbye, uncle. Call me a chair. I'll find out my aunt and tell her she must not come home.

[Exit ANGELICA and SERVANT.]

Fore. I'm so perplexed and vexed, I am not fit to receive him. I shall scarce recover myself before the hour be past. Go, Nurse, tell Sir Sampson I'm ready to wait on him.

Nurse. Yes, sir.

[Exit.]

Fore. Well. Why, if I was born to be a cuckold, there's no more to be said. He's here already.

Enter SIR SAMPSON LEGEND with a paper.

Sir Samp. Nor no more to be done, old boy. That's plain. Here 'tis, I have it in my hand, old Ptolemy.* I'll make the ungracious prodigal know who begat him, I will, old Nostradamus.† What, I warrant my son thought nothing belonged to a father but forgiveness and affection. No authority, no correction, no arbitrary power! Nothing to be done but for him to offend and me to pardon! I warrant you, if he danced till doomsday, he thought I was to pay the piper. Well, but here it is under black and white, *signatum*, *sigillatum*, and *deliberatum*: that as soon as my son Benjamin is arrived, he is to make over to him his right of inheritance. Where's my daughter that is to be,

* Ptolemæus Alexandrinus, whose *Almagest* was for centuries the standard work on astronomy.

† Michel de Notredame, Catharine de Medici's astrologer.

ha, old Merlin? Body o' me, I'm so glad I'm revenged on this undutiful rogue.

Fore. Odso, let me see. Let me see the paper. Aye, faith and troth, here 'tis, if it will but hold. I wish things were done, and the conveyance made. When was this signed, what hour? Odso, you should have consulted me for the time. Well, but we'll make haste.

Sir Samp. Haste? Aye, aye, haste enough, my son Ben will be in town to-night. I have ordered my lawyer to draw up writings of settlement and jointure. All shall be done to-night. No matter for the time! Prithee, brother Foresight, leave superstition. Pox o' th' time! There's no time but the time present; there's no more to be said of what's past, and all that is to come will happen. If the sun shine by day, and the stars by night, why, we shall know one another's faces without the help of a candle, and that's all the stars are good for.

Fore. How, how, Sir Sampson, that all? Give me leave to contradict you, and tell you you are ignorant.

Sir Samp. I tell you I am wise, and *sapiens dominabitur astris*. There's Latin for you to prove it, and an argument to confound your Ephemeris.* Ignorant! I tell you I have travelled, old Fircu,† and know the globe. I have seen the Antipodes, where the sun rises at midnight, and sets at noonday.

Fore. But I tell you I have travelled, and travelled in the celestial spheres, know the signs and the planets, and their houses; can judge of motions direct and retrograde, of sextiles, quadrates, trines and oppositions, fiery trigons and aquatical trigons; know whether life shall be long or short, happy or unhappy, whether diseases are curable or incurable, if journeys shall be prosperous, undertakings successful, or goods stolen recovered. I know——

* Astronomical almanac.

† A name applied to a witch's familiar.

Sir Samp. I know the length of the Emperor of China's foot, have kissed the Great Mogul's slipper, and rid a-hunting upon an elephant with the Cham of Tartary. Body o' me, I have made a cuckold of a king, and the present majesty of Bantam is the issue of these loins.

Fore. I know when travellers lie or speak truth, when they don't know it themselves.

Sir Samp. I have known an astrologer made a cuckold in the twinkling of a star, and seen a conjuror that could not keep the devil out of his wife's circle.

Fore. [*aside*]. What, does he twit me with my wife too? I must be better informed of this. [*Aloud.*] Do you mean my wife, Sir Sampson? Though you made a cuckold of the King of Bantam, yet by the body of the sun——

Sir Samp. By the horns of the moon, you would say, Brother Capricorn.

Fore. Capricorn in your teeth, thou modern Mandevil! Ferdinand Mendez Pinto was but a type of thee, thou liar of the first magnitude. Take back your paper of inheritance; send your son to sea again. I'll wed my daughter to an Egyptian mummy, ere she shall incorporate with a contemner of sciences, and a defamer of virtue.

Sir Samp. [*aside*]. Body o' me, I have gone too far; I must not provoke honest Albumazar. [*Aloud.*] An Egyptian mummy is an illustrious creature, my trusty hieroglyphic, and may have significations of futurity about him. Odsbud, I would my son were an Egyptian mummy for thy sake. What, thou art not angry for a jest, my good Haly.† I reverence the sun, moon and stars with all my heart. What, I'll make thee a present of a mummy. Now I think on't, body o' me, I have a shoulder of an Egyptian

* Pinto was a Portuguese adventurer who published his *Peregrination* in 1614.

† Albumazar and Haly were Arabian astronomers of the ninth century.

king, that I purloined from one of the pyramids, powdered with hieroglyphics. Thou shalt have it brought home to thy house, and make an entertainment for all the philomaths,* and students in physic and astrology in and about London.

Fore. But what do you know of my wife, Sir Sampson?

Sir Samp. Thy wife is a constellation of virtues; she's the moon, and thou art the man in the moon. Nay, she is more illustrious than the moon, for she has her chastity without her inconstancy. S'bud, I was but in jest.

Enter JEREMY.

Sir Samp. How now, who sent for you? Ha! What would you have?

Fore. Nay, if you were but in jest. Who's that fellow? I don't like his physiognomy.

Sir Samp. [*to JEREMY*]. My son, sir, what son, sir? My son Benjamin, hoh?

Fer. No, sir, Mr. Valentine, my master. 'Tis the first time he has been abroad since his confinement, and he comes to pay his duty to you.

Sir Samp. Well, sir.

Enter VALENTINE.

Fer. He is here, sir.

Val. Your blessing, sir.

Sir Samp. You've had it already, sir. I think I sent it you to-day in a bill of four thousand pound. A great deal of money, brother Foresight.

Fore. Aye, indeed, Sir Sampson, a great deal of money for a young man. I wonder what he can do with it?

Sir Samp. Body o' me, so do I. Hark ye, Valentine, if there be too much, refund the superfluity, dost hear, boy?

Val. Superfluity, sir! It will scarce pay my debts. I hope

* Savant.

you will have more indulgence than to oblige me to those hard conditions which my necessity signed to.

Sir Samp. Sir, how, I beseech you? What were you pleased to intimate concerning indulgence?

Val. Why, sir, that you would not go to the extremity of the conditions, but release me at least from some part.

Sir Samp. Oh, sir, I understand you. That's all, ha?

Val. Yes, sir, all that I presume to ask. But what you, out of fatherly fondness, will be pleased to add shall be doubly welcome.

Sir Samp. No doubt of it, sweet sir, but your filial piety and my fatherly fondness would fit like two tallies. Here's a rogue, brother Foresight, makes a bargain under hand and seal in the morning, and would be released from it in the afternoon! Here's a rogue, dog, here's conscience and honesty! This is your wit now, this is the morality of your wits! You are a wit, and have been a beau, and may be a — Why, sirrah, is it not here under hand and seal? Can you deny it?

Val. Sir, I don't deny it.

Sir Samp. Sirrah, you'll be hanged; I shall live to see you go up Holborn Hill.* Has he not a rogue's face? Speak, brother, you understand physiognomy. A hanging look to me, of all my boys the most unlike me. A has a damned Tyburn face, without the benefit o' the clergy.

Fore. Hum. Truly I don't care to discourage a young man. He has a violent death in his face, but I hope no danger of hanging.

Val. Sir, is this usage for your son? For that old weather-headed fool, I know how to laugh at him; but you, sir?

Sir Samp. You, sir, and you, sir! Why, who are you, sir?

Val. Your son, sir.

* i.e., on the way to Tyburn from Newgate.

Sir Samp. That's more than I know, sir, and I believe not.

Val. Faith, I hope not.

Sir Samp. What, would you have your mother a whore? Did you ever hear the like! Did you ever hear the like! Body o' me!

Val. I would have an excuse for your barbarity and unnatural usage.

Sir Samp. Excuse? Impudence! Why, sirrah, mayn't I do what I please? Are not you my slave? Did not I beget you? And might not I have chosen whether I would have begot you or no? 'Oons, who are you? Whence came you? What brought you into the world? How came you here, sir? Here, to stand here, upon those two legs, and look erect with that audacious face, ha? Answer me that? Did you come a volunteer into the world? Or did I, with the lawful authority of a parent, press you to the service?

Val. I know no more why I came, than you do why you called me. But here I am, and if you don't mean to provide for me, I desire you would leave me as you found me.

Sir Samp. With all my heart. Come, uncase, strip, and go naked out of the world, as you came into 't.

Val. My clothes are soon put off. But you must also divest me of reason, thought, passions, inclinations, affections, appetites, senses, and the huge train of attendants that you begot along with me.

Sir Samp. Body o' me, what a many-headed monster have I propagated!

Val. I am of myself a plain, easy, simple creature, and to be kept at small expense, but the retinue that you gave me are craving and invincible. They are so many devils that you have raised, and will have employment.

Sir Samp. 'Oons, what had I to do to get children? Can't a private man be born without all these followers?

Why, nothing under an emperor should be born with appetites. Why, at this rate a fellow that has but a groat in his pocket may have a stomach capable of a ten shilling ordinary.

Fer. Nay, that's as clear as the sun. I'll make oath of it before any justice in Middlesex.

Sir Samp. Here's a cormorant too. 'Sheart this fellow was not born with you? I did not beget him, did I?

Fer. By the provision that's made for me, you might have begot me too. Nay, and to tell your worship another truth, I believe you did, for I find I was born with those same whoreson appetites too, that my master speaks of.

Sir Samp. Why, look you there now. I'll maintain it, that by the rule of right reason this fellow ought to have been born without a palate. 'Sheart, what should he do with a distinguishing taste? I warrant now he'd rather eat a pheasant than a piece of poor John.* And smell, now, why I warrant he can smell, and loves perfumes above a stink. Why, there's it. And music, don't you love music, scoundrel?

Fer. Yes, I have a reasonable good ear, sir, as to jigs and country dances, and the like. I don't much matter your solos or sonatas, they give me the spleen.

Sir Samp. The spleen! Ha, ha, ha! A pox confound you, solos or sonatas! 'Oons, whose son are you? How were you engendered, muckworm?

Fer. I am, by my father, the son of a chairman; my mother sold oysters in winter, and cucumbers in summer; and I came upstairs into the world, for I was born in a cellar.

Fore. By your looks you should go upstairs out of the world too, friend.†

* Salted hake.

† i.e., by way of the gallows.

Sir Samp. And if this rogue were anatomised now, and dissected, he has his vessels of digestion and concoction, and so forth, large enough for the inside of a cardinal, this son of a cucumber. These things are unaccountable and unreasonable. Body o' me, why was not I a bear, that my cubs might have lived upon sucking their paws? Nature has been provident only to bears and spiders; the one has its nutriment in his own hands, and tother spins his habitation out of his own entrails.

Val. Fortune was provident enough to supply all the necessities of my nature, if I had my right of inheritance.

Sir Samp. Again! 'Oons, ha'n't you four thousand pound? If I had it again, I would not give thee a groat. What, would'st thou have me turn pelican, and feed thee out of my own vitals? 'Sheart, live by your wits. You were always fond of the wits. Now let's see if you have wit enough to keep yourself. Your brother will be in town to-night, or to-morrow morning, and then look you perform covenants, and so your friend and servant. Come, brother Foresight. [*Exeunt SIR SAMPSON and FORESIGHT.*]

Fer. I told you what your visit would come to.

Val. 'Tis as much as I expected. I did not come to see him. I came to Angelica. But since she was gone abroad, it was easily turned another way, and at least looked well on my side. What's here? Mrs. Foresight and Mrs. Frail? They are earnest; I'll avoid 'em. Come this way, and go and enquire when Angelica will return. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter MRS. FORESIGHT and MRS. FRAIL.

Mrs. Frail. What have you to do to watch me? 'Slife, I'll do what I please.

Mrs. Fore. You will?

Mrs. Frail. Yes, marry will I. A great piece of business to go to Covent Garden Square in a hackney coach, and take a turn with one's friend!

Mrs. Fore. Nay, two or three turns, I'll take my oath.

Mrs. Frail. Well, what if I took twenty? I warrant if you had been there, it had been only innocent recreation. Lord, where's the comfort of this life, if we can't have the happiness of conversing where we like?

Mrs. Fore. But can't you converse at home? I own it, I think there's no happiness like conversing with an agreeable man. I don't quarrel at that, nor I don't think but your conversation was very innocent; but the place is public, and to be seen with a man in a hackney coach is scandalous. What if anybody else should have seen you alight, as I did? How can anybody be happy, while they're in perpetual fear of being seen and censured? Besides, it would not only reflect upon you, sister, but me.

Mrs. Frail. Pooh, here's a clutter. Why should it reflect upon you? I don't doubt but you have thought yourself happy in a hackney coach before now. If I had gone to Knightsbridge, or to Chelsea, or to Spring Garden, or Barn Elms with a man alone, something might have been said.

Mrs. Fore. Why, was I ever in any of those places? What do you mean, sister?

Mrs. Frail. Was I? What do you mean?

Mrs. Fore. You have been at a worse place.

Mrs. Frail. I, at a worse place, and with a man!

Mrs. Fore. I suppose you would not go alone to the World's End.*

Mrs. Frail. The World's End! What, do you mean to banter me?

Mrs. Fore. Poor innocent! You don't know that there's a place called the World's End! I swear you can keep your

* There was an inn of this name in Knightsbridge and another in Chelsea. Spring Garden was "a very large open place" on the site of the present Admiralty Arch. Barn Elms was a village on the Thames near Fulham.

countenance purely; you'd make an admirable player.

Mrs. Frail. I'll swear you have a great deal of confidence, and in my mind too much for the stage.

Mrs. Fore. Very well, that will appear who has most. You never were at the World's End?

Mrs. Frail. No.

Mrs. Fore. You deny it positively to my face.

Mrs. Frail. Your face, what's your face?

Mrs. Fore. No matter for that; it's as good a face as yours.

Mrs. Frail. Not by a dozen years' wearing. But I do deny it positively to your face then.

Mrs. Fore. I'll allow you now to find fault with my face, for I'll swear your impudence has put me out of countenance. But look you here now, where did you lose this gold bodkin? Oh, sister, sister!

Mrs. Frail. My bodkin!

Mrs. Fore. Nay, 'tis yours, look at it.

Mrs. Frail. Well, if you go to that, where did you find this bodkin? Oh, sister, sister! Sister every way!

Mrs. Fore. [*aside*]. Oh, devil on't, that I could not discover her without betraying myself.

Mrs. Frail. I have heard gentlemen say, sister, that one should take great care, when one makes a thrust in fencing, not to lie open oneself.

Mrs. Fore. It's very true, sister. Well, since all's out, and as you say, since we are both wounded, let us do what is often done in duels, take care of one another, and grow better friends than before.

Mrs. Frail. With all my heart. Ours are but slight flesh wounds, and if we keep 'em from air, not at all dangerous. Well, give me your hand in token of sisterly secrecy and affection.

Mrs. Fore. Here 'tis with all my heart.

Mrs. Frail. Well, as an earnest of friendship and confidence, I'll acquaint you with a design that I have. To tell truth, and speak openly one to another, I'm afraid the world have observed us more than we have observed one another. You have a rich husband, and are provided for; I am at a loss, and have no great stock either of fortune or reputation, and therefore must look sharply about me. Sir Sampson has a son that is expected to-night, and by the account I have heard of his education can be no conjuror. The estate, you know, is to be made over to him. Now if I could wheedle him, sister, ha? You understand me?

Mrs. Fore. I do; and will help you to the utmost of my power. And I can tell you one thing that falls out luckily enough. My awkward daughter-in-law, who you know is designed to be his wife, is grown fond of Mr. Tattle. Now if we can improve that, and make her have an aversion for the booby, it may go a great way towards his liking you. Here they come together, and let us contrive some way or other to leave 'em together.

Enter TATTLE and MISS PRUE.

Miss. Mother, mother, mother, look you here.

Mrs. Fore. Fie, fie, Miss, how you bawl! Besides, I have told you you must not call me mother.

Miss. What must I call you then? Are you not my father's wife?

Mrs. Fore. Madam; you must say madam. By my soul, I shall fancy myself old indeed to have this great girl call me mother. Well, but, Miss, what are you so overjoyed at?

Miss. Look you here, madam then, what Mr. Tattle has given me. Look you here, cousin, here's a snuff box; nay, there's snuff in 't. Here, will you have any? Oh, good! How sweet it is. Mr. Tattle is all over sweet: his peruke is sweet, and his gloves are sweet, and his handker-

chief is sweet, pure sweet, sweeter than roses. Smell him, mother, madam, I mean. He gave me this ring for a kiss.

Tat. Oh, fie, Miss, you must not kiss and tell.

Miss. Yes; I may tell my mother. And he says he'll give me something to make me smell so. [*To TATTLE.*] Oh pray, lend me your handkerchief. Smell, cousin; he says he'll give me something that will make my smocks smell this way. Is not it pure? It's better than lavender, mun.* I'm resolved I won't let Nurse put any more lavender among my smocks, ha, cousin?

Mrs. Frail. Fie, Miss! Amongst your linen, you must say. You must never say smock.

Miss. Why, it is not bawdy, is it, cousin?

Tat. Oh, madam, you are too severe upon Miss. You must not find fault with her pretty simplicity, it becomes her strangely. Pretty Miss, don't let 'em persuade you out of your innocence.

Mrs. Fore. Oh, demn you, toad. I wish you don't persuade her out of her innocence.

Tat. Who, I, madam? Oh, Lord, how can your ladyship have such a thought? Sure you don't know me.

Mrs. Frail. Ah, devil, sly devil. He's as close, sister, as a confessor. He thinks we don't observe him.

Mrs. Fore. A cunning cur. How soon he could find out a fresh harmless creature, and left us, sister, presently.

Tat. Upon reputation——

Mrs. Fore. They're all so, sister, these men. They love to have the spoiling of a young thing. They are as fond of it as of being first in the fashion, or of seeing a new play the first day. I warrant it would break Mr. Tattle's heart to think that anybody else should be beforehand with him.

Tat. Oh Lord, I swear I would not for the world.

Mrs. Frail. Oh, hang you, who'll believe you? You'd be

* i.e., man: an almost meaningless interjection then common in the country.

hanged before you'd confess, we know you. She's very pretty. Lord, what pure red and white! She looks so wholesome. Ne'er stir, I don't know, but I fancy, if I were a man——

Miss. How you love to jeer one, cousin.

Mrs. Fore. Hark'ee, sister, by my soul the girl is spoiled already. D'ye think she'll ever endure a great lubberly tarpaulin. Gad, I warrant you, she won't let him come near her, after Mr. Tattle.

Mrs. Frail. O' my soul, I'm afraid not. Ugh, filthy creature, that smells all of pitch and tar! [*To TATTLE.*] Devil take you, you confounded toad! Why did you see her before she was married?

Mrs. Fore. Nay, why did we let him? My husband will hang us. He'll think we brought 'em acquainted.

Mrs. Frail. Come, faith, let us be gone. If my brother Foresight should find us with them, he'd think so, sure enough.

Mrs. Fore. So he would. But then leaving 'em together is as bad! And he's such a sly devil, he'll never miss an opportunity.

Mrs. Frail. I don't care; I won't be seen in 't.

Mrs. Fore. Well, if you should, Mr. Tattle, you'll have a world to answer for. Remember I wash my hands of it, I'm thoroughly innocent.

[*Exeunt* MRS. FORESIGHT and MRS. FRAIL.]

Miss. What makes 'em go away, Mr. Tattle? What do they mean, do you know?

Tat. Yes, my dear. I think I can guess. But hang me if I know the reason of it.

Miss. Come, must not we go too?

Tat. No, no, they don't mean that.

Miss. No! What then? What shall you and I do together?

Tat. I must make love to you, pretty Miss. Will you let me make love to you?

Miss. Yes, if you please.

Tat. [*aside*]. Frank, egad, at least. What a pox does Mrs. Foresight mean by this civility? Is it to make a fool of me? Or does she leave us together out of good morality, and do as she would be done by? Gad, I'll understand it so.

Miss. Well, and how will you make love to me. Come, I long to have you begin. Must I make love too? You must tell me how.

Tat. You must let me speak, Miss, you must not speak first. I must ask you questions, and you must answer.

Miss. What, is it like the Catechism? Come then, ask me.

Tat. D'ye think you can love me?

Miss. Yes.

Tat. Pooh, pox, you must not say yes already. I shan't care a farthing for you then in a twinkling.

Miss. What must I say then?

Tat. Why, you must say no, or you believe not, or you can't tell.

Miss. Why, must I tell a lie then?

Tat. Yes, if you'd be well bred. All well-bred persons lie. Besides, you are a woman, you must never speak what you think. Your words must contradict your thoughts; but your actions may contradict your words. So, when I ask you, if you can love me, you must say no, but you must love me too. If I tell you you are handsome, you must deny it, and say I flatter you. But you must think yourself more charming than I speak you, and like me for the beauty which I say you have, as much as if I had it myself. If I ask you to kiss me, you must be angry, but you must not refuse me. If I ask you for more, you must be more angry, but more complying, and as soon as ever I make

you say you'll cry out, you must be sure to hold your tongue.

Miss. Oh Lord, I swear this is pure. I like it better than our old-fashioned country way of speaking one's mind. And must not you lie too?

Tat. Hum—yes. But you must believe I speak truth.

Miss. Oh, Gemini! Well, I always had a great mind to tell lies, but they frightened me, and said it was a sin.

Tat. Well, my pretty creature, will you make me happy by giving me a kiss?

Miss. No, indeed, I'm angry at you. [*Runs and kisses him.*]

Tat. Hold, hold, that's pretty well. But you should not have given it me, but have suffered me to have taken it.

Miss. Well, we'll do it again.

Tat. With all my heart. Now then, my little angel.

[*Kisses her.*]

Miss. Pish.

Tat. That's right. Again, my charmer. [*Kisses again.*]

Miss. Oh fie, nay, now I can't abide you.

Tat. Admirable! That was as well as if you had been born and bred in Covent Garden. And won't you show me, pretty Miss, where your bed-chamber is?

Miss. No, indeed won't I; but I'll run there, and hide myself from you behind the curtains.

Tat. I'll follow you.

Miss. Ah, but I'll hold the door with both hands, and be angry; and you shall push me down before you come in.

Tat. No, I'll come in first, and push you down afterwards.

Miss. Will you? Then I'll be more angry, and more complying.

Tat. Then I'll make you cry out.

Miss. Oh, but you shan't, for I'll hold my tongue.

[*Exit Miss.*]

Tat. Oh, my dear apt scholar. [Exit after her.]

Miss. Well, now I'll run and make more haste than you.

Tat. You shall not fly so fast as I'll pursue.

ACT III

Scene I—*A Room in FORESIGHT'S House.*

Enter NURSE.

Nurse. Miss, Miss, Miss Prue. Mercy on me, marry and Amen. Why, what's become of the child? Why, Miss, Miss Foresight. Sure she has locked herself up in her chamber and gone to sleep, or to prayers. Miss, Miss. I hear her. Come to your father, child. Open the door. Open the door, Miss. I hear you cry hushed. Oh Lord, who's there? [*Peeps.*] What's here to do? Oh the Father! a man with her! Why, Miss, I say. God's my life, here's fine doings towards. Oh Lord, we're all undone. Oh, you young harlotry. [*Knocks.*] Od's my life, won't you open the door? I'll come in the back way.

TATTLE and MISS PRUE at the door.

Miss. Oh, Lord, she's coming, and she'll tell my father. What shall I do now?

Tat. Pox take her! If she had stayed two minutes longer, I should have wished for her coming.

Miss. Oh dear, what shall I say? Tell me, Mr. Tattle, tell me a lie.

Tat. There's no occasion for a lie; I could never tell a lie to no purpose. But since we have done nothing, we must say nothing, I think. I hear her. I'll leave you together, and come off as you can. [*Thrusts her in, and shuts the door.*]

Enter VALENTINE, SCANDAL and ANGELICA.

Ang. You can't accuse me of inconstancy; I never told you that I loved you.

Val. But I can accuse you of uncertainty, for not telling me whether you did or not.

Ang. You mistake indifference for uncertainty; I never had concern enough to ask myself the question.

Scan. Nor good nature enough to answer him that did ask you. I'll say that for you, madam.

Ang. What, are you setting up for good nature?

Scan. Only for the affectation of it, as the women do for ill-nature.

Ang. Persuade your friend that it is all affectation.

Val. I shall receive no benefit from the opinion. For I know no effectual difference between continued affectation and reality.

Tat. [*coming up, aside to SCANDAL*]. Scandal, are you in private discourse, anything of secrecy?

Scan. Yes, but I dare trust you; we were talking of Angelica's love to Valentine. You won't speak of it?

Tat. No, no, not a syllable. I know that's a secret, for it's whispered everywhere.

Scan. Ha, ha, ha!

Ang. What is, Mr. Tattle? I heard you say something was whispered everywhere.

Scan. Your love of Valentine.

Ang. How?

Tat. No, madam, his love for your ladyship. Gad, take me, I beg your pardon, for I never heard a word of your ladyship's passion till this instant.

Ang. My passion! And who told you of my passion, pray, sir?

Scan. [*to TATTLE*]. Why, is the devil in you? Did not I tell it you for a secret?

Tat. Gadso, but I thought she might have been trusted with her own affairs.

Scan. Is that your discretion, trust a woman with herself?

Tat. You say true, I beg your pardon; I'll bring all off. [*To ANGELICA.*] It was impossible, madam, for me to imagine that a person of your ladyship's wit and gallantry could have so long received the passionate addresses of the accomplished Valentine, and yet remain insensible; therefore you will pardon me, if from a just weight of his merit, with your ladyship's good judgment, I formed the balance of a reciprocal affection.

Val. Oh, the devil! what damned costive poet has given thee this lesson of fustian to get by rote?

Ang. I dare swear you wrong him; it is his own. And Mr. Tattle only judges of the success of others from the effects of his own merit. For certainly Mr. Tattle was never denied anything in his life.

Tat. Oh Lord! yes indeed, madam, several times.

Ang. I swear I don't think 'tis possible.

Tat. Yes, I vow and swear I have. Lord, madam, I'm the most unfortunate man in the world, and the most cruelly used by the ladies.

Ang. Nay, now you're ungrateful.

Tat. No, I hope not. 'Tis as much ingratitude to own some favours as to conceal others.

Val. There, now it's out.

Ang. I don't understand you now. I thought you had never asked anything, but what a lady might modestly grant, and you confess.

Scan. So, faith, your business is done here. Now you may go brag somewhere else.

Tat. Brag! Oh heavens! Why, did I name anybody?

Ang. No, I suppose that is not in your power; but you would if you could, no doubt on't.

Tat. Not in my power, madam! What, does your ladyship mean that I have no woman's reputation in my power?

Scan. [*aside*]. 'Oons, why you won't own it, will you?

Tat. Faith, madam, you're in the right. No more I have, as I hope to be saved. I never had it in my power to say anything to a lady's prejudice in my life. For as I was telling you, madam, I have been the most unsuccessful creature living in things of that nature, and never had the good fortune to be trusted once with a lady's secret, not once.

Ang. No?

Val. Not once, I dare answer for him.

Scan. And I'll answer for him; for I'm sure if he had, he would have told me. I find, madam, you don't know Mr. Tattle.

Tat. No, indeed, madam, you don't know me at all, I find. For sure my intimate friends would have known.

Ang. Then it seems you would have told, if you had been trusted.

Tat. Oh pox, Scandal, that was too far put. Never have told particulars, madam. Perhaps I might have talked as of a third person, or have introduced an amour of my own, in conversation, by way of novel; but never have explained particulars.

Ang. But whence comes the reputation of Mr. Tattle's secrecy, if he was never trusted?

Scan. Why thence it arises. The thing is proverbially spoken, but may be applied to him. As if we should say in general terms, he only is secret who never was trusted. A satirical proverb upon our sex. There's another upon yours. As she is chaste, who was never asked the question. That's all.

Val. A couple of very civil proverbs, truly. 'Tis hard to tell whether the lady or Mr. Tattle be the more obliged to you. For you found her virtue upon the backwardness of the men, and his secrecy upon the mistrust of the women.

Tat. Gad, it's very true, madam; I think we are obliged to acquit ourselves. And for my part—— But your ladyship is to speak first.

Ang. Am I? Well, I freely confess I have resisted a great deal of temptation.

Tat. And egad, I have given some temptation that has not been resisted.

Val. Good.

Ang. I cite Valentine here to declare to the court how fruitless he has found his endeavours, and to confess all his solicitations and my denials.

Val. I am ready to plead Not Guilty for you, and Guilty for myself.

Scan. So, why this is fair. Here's demonstration with a witness.

Tat. Well, my witnesses are not present, but I confess I have had favours from persons. But as the favours are numberless, so the persons are nameless.

Scan. Pooh, this proves nothing.

Tat. No? I can show letters, lockets, pictures and rings; and if there be occasion for witnesses, I can summon the maids at the Chocolate Houses, all the porters at Pall Mall and Covent Garden, the doorkeepers at the Playhouse, the drawers at Locket's, Pontack's, the Rummer,* Spring Garden, my own landlady and *valet de chambre*, all who shall make oath, that I receive more letters than the Secretary's office, and that I have more visor-masks to enquire for me than ever went to see the Hermaphrodite, or the naked Prince.† And it is notorious that in a country church once, an enquiry being made who I was, it was

* Pontack's and Locket's were the most famous restaurants of the day. The Rummer was where Prior served his uncle as pot-boy.

† The naked Prince was Giolo, a South Sea islander, whose tattooings were the object of much interest in London.

answered I was the famous Tattle, who had ruined so many women.

Val. It was there, I suppose, you got the nickname of the Great Turk.

Tat. True: I was called Turk Tattle all over the parish. The next Sunday all the old women kept their daughters at home, and the parson had not half his congregation. He would have brought me into the Spiritual Court, but I was revenged upon him, for he had a handsome daughter whom I initiated into the science. But I repented it afterwards, for it was talked of in town. And a lady of quality that shall be nameless, in a raging fit of jealousy, came down in her coach and six horses, and exposed herself upon my account. Gad, I was sorry for it with all my heart. You know whom I mean. You know where we raffled——

Scan. Mum, Tattle.

Val. 'Sdeath, are not you ashamed?

Ang. Oh, barbarous! I never heard so insolent a piece of vanity. Fie, Mr. Tattle! I'll swear I could not have believed it. Is this your secrecy?

Tat. Gad, so, the heat of my story carried me beyond my discretion, as the heat of the lady's passion hurried her beyond her reputation. But I hope you don't know whom I mean, for there was a great many ladies raffled. Pox on't, now could I bite off my tongue.

Scan. No, don't, for then you'll tell us no more. Come, I'll recommend a song to you upon the hint of my two proverbs, and I see one in the next room that will sing it.

[*Goes to the door.*]

Tat. For Heaven's sake, if you do guess, say nothing. Gad, I'm very unfortunate.

Re-enter SCANDAL with one to sing.

Scan. Pray sing the first song in the last new play.

A nymph and a swain to Apollo once prayed;
The swain had been jilted, the nymph been betrayed.
Their intent was to try if his oracle knew
E'er a nymph that was chaste, or a swain that was true.

Apollo was mute, and had like t' have been posed,
But sagely at length he this secret disclosed:
He alone won't betray in whom none will confide,
And the nymph may be chaste that has never been
tried. [Exit SINGER.]

Enter SIR SAMPSON, MRS. FRAIL, MISS PRUE *and* SERVANT.

Sir Samp. Is Ben come? Odso, my son Ben come? Odd, I'm glad on't. Where is he? I long to see him. Now, Mrs. Frail, you shall see my son Ben. Body o' me, he's the hopes of my family. I ha'n't seen him these three years. I warrant he's grown. Call him in, bid him make haste. I'm ready to cry for joy. [Exit SERVANT.]

Mrs. Frail. Now, Miss, you shall see your husband.

Miss. [*aside to MRS. FRAIL*]. Pish, he shall be none of my husband.

Mrs. Frail. Hush. Well, he shan't, leave that to me. I'll beckon Mr. Tattle to us.

Ang. Won't you stay and see your brother?

Val. We are the twin stars, and cannot shine in one sphere; when he rises I must set. Besides, if I should stay, I don't know but my father in good nature may press me to the immediate signing the deed of conveyance of my estate, and I'll defer it as long as I can. Well, you'll come to a resolution.

Ang. I can't. Resolution must come to me, or I shall never have one.

Scan. Come, Valentine, I'll go with you; I've something in my head to communicate to you.

[Exit VALENTINE *and* SCANDAL.]

Sir Samp. What, is my son Valentine gone? What, is he sneaked off, and would not see his brother? There's an unnatural whelp! There's an ill-natured dog! What, were you here too, madam, and could not keep him? Could neither love, nor duty, nor natural affection oblige him? Odsbud, madam, have no more to say to him; he is not worth your consideration. The rogue has not a drachm of generous love about him. All interest, all interest. He's an undone scoundrel, and courts your estate. Body o' me, he does not care a doit for your person.

Ang. I'm pretty even with him, Sir Sampson, for if ever I could have liked anything in him, it should have been his estate too. But since that's gone, the bait's off, and the naked hook appears.

Sir Samp. Odsbud, well spoken! And you are a wiser woman than I thought you were, for most young women nowadays are to be tempted with a naked hook.

Ang. If I marry, Sir Sampson, I'm for a good estate with any man, and for any man with a good estate. Therefore if I were obliged to make a choice, I declare I'd rather have you than your son.

Sir Samp. Faith and troth, you're a wise woman, and I'm glad to hear you say so. I was afraid you were in love with the reprobate. Odd, I was sorry for you with all my heart. Hang him, mongrel! Cast him off, you shall see the rogue show himself, and make love to some desponding cadua* of fourscore for sustenance. Odd, I love to see a young spendthrift forced to cling to an old woman for support, like ivy round a dead oak, faith I do. I love to see 'em hug and cotton together, like down upon a thistle.

Enter BEN LEGEND and SERVANT.

Ben. Where's father?

* Wanton harriidan,

Serv. There, sir, his back's toward you.

Sir Samp. My son Ben! Bless thee, my dear boy. Body o' me, thou art heartily welcome.

Ben. Thank you, father, and I'm glad to see you.

Sir Samp. Odsbud, and I'm glad to see thee. Kiss me, boy, kiss me again and again, dear Ben. [*Kisses him.*]

Ben. So, so, enough, father. Mess, I'd rather kiss these gentlewomen.

Sir Samp. And so thou shalt. Mrs. Angelica, my son Ben.

Ben. Forsooth, if you please. [*Salutes her.*] Nay, mistress, I'm not for dropping anchor here. About ship, i'faith. [*Kisses MRS. FRAIL.*] Nay, and you too, my little cock-boat. So! [*Kisses Miss.*]

Tat. Sir, you're welcome ashore.

Ben. Thank you, thank you, friend.

Sir Samp. Thou hast been many a weary league, Ben, since I saw thee.

Ben. Aye, aye, been! Been far enough, and that be all. Well, father, and how do all at home? How does brother Dick, and brother Val?

Sir Samp. Dick, body o' me! Dick has been dead these two years. I writ you word, when you were at Leghorn.

Ben. Mess, that's true. Marry, I had forgot. Dick's dead, as you say. Well, and how? I have a many questions to ask you. Well, you ben't married again, father, be you?

Sir Samp. No, I intend you shall marry, Ben. I would not marry for thy sake.

Ben. Nay, what does that signify? An you marry again, why then, I'll go to sea again. So there's one for tother, an that be all. Pray don't let me be your hindrance. E'en marry i' God's name an the wind sit that way. As for my part, mayhap I have no mind to marry.

Mrs. Frail. That would be pity, such a handsome young gentleman.

Ben. Handsome? He, he, he! Nay, forsooth, and you be for joking, I'll joke with you, for I love my jest, an the ship were sinking, as we sayn at sea. But I'll tell you why I don't much stand towards matrimony. I love to roam about from port to port, and from land to land. I could never abide to be port-bound, as we call it. Now a man that is married has, as it were, d'ye see, his feet in the bilboes,* and mayhap mayn't get 'em out again when he would.

Sir Samp. Ben's a wag.

Ben. A man that is married, d'ye see, is no more like another man, than a galley-slave is like one of us free sailors. He is chained to an oar all his life, and mayhap forced to tug a leaky vessel into the bargain.

Sir Samp. A very wag, Ben's a very wag. Only a little rough; he wants a little polishing.

Mrs. Frail. Not at all. I like his humour mightily; it's plain and honest. I should like such a humour in a husband extremely.

Ben. Sayn you so, forsooth? Marry, and I should like such a handsome gentlewoman for a bed-fellow hugely. How say you, mistress, would you like going to sea? Mess, you're a tight vessel, and well rigged, an you were but as well manned.

Mrs. Frail. I should not doubt that, if you were master of me.

Ben. But I'll tell you one thing, and you come to sea in a high wind, or that, lady, you mayn't carry so much sail o' your head. Top and top-gallant, by the Mess.

Mrs. Frail. No, why so?

Ben. Why an you do, you may run the risk to be overset,

* Ships' irons, stocks.

and then you'll carry your keels above water. He, he, he!

Ang. I swear Mr. Benjamin is the veriest wag in nature, an absolute sea-wit.

Sir Samp. Nay, Ben has parts, but as I told you before, they want a little polishing. You must not take anything ill, madam.

Ben. No, I hope the gentlewoman is not angry. I mean all in good part. For if I give a jest, I'll take a jest, and so, forsooth, you may be as free with me.

Ang. I thank you, sir, I am not at all offended. But methinks, Sir Sampson, you should leave him alone with his mistress. Mr. Tattle, we must not hinder lovers.

Tat. [*aside to Miss*]. Well, Miss, I have your promise.

Sir Samp. Body o' me, madam, you say true. Look you, Ben, this is your mistress. Come, Miss, you must not be shamefaced. We'll leave you together.

Miss. I can't abide to be left alone. Mayn't my cousin stay with me?

Sir Samp. No, no. Come, let's away.

Ben. Look you, father, mayhap the young woman mayn't take a liking to me.

Sir Samp. I warrant thee, boy. Come, come, we'll be gone. I'll venture that.

[*Exeunt all but BEN and MISS.*]

Ben. Come, mistress, will you please to sit down? For an you stand astern o' that'n, we shall never grapple together. Come, I'll haul a chair. There, an you please to sit, I'll sit by you.

Miss. You need not sit so near one. If you have anything to say, I can hear you farther off. I ain't deaf.

Ben. Why, that's true, as you say, nor I ain't dumb. I can be heard as far as another. I'll heave off, to please you. [*Sits farther off.*] An we were a league asunder, I'd undertake to hold discourse with you, an 'twere not a main high

wind indeed, and full in my teeth. Look you, forsooth, I am, as it were, bound for the land of matrimony. 'Tis a voyage, d'ye, that was none of my seeking. I was commanded by father, and if you like of it, mayhap I may steer into your harbour. How say you, mistress? The short of the thing is that if you like me, and I like you, we may chance to swing in a hammock together.

Miss. I don't know what to say to you, nor I don't care to speak with you at all.

Ben. No, I'm sorry for that. But pray, why are you so scornful?

Miss. As long as one must not speak one's mind, one had better not speak at all, I think, and truly I won't tell a lie for the matter.

Ben. Nay, you say true in that. It's but a folly to lie. For to speak one thing, and to think just the contrary way is, as it were, to look one way and to row another. Now, for my part, d'ye see, I'm for carrying things above board. I'm not for keeping anything under hatches. So that if you ben't as willing as I, say so i' God's name, there's no harm done. Mayhap you may be shamefaced. Some maidens thof they love a man well enough yet they don't care to tell 'n so to 's face. If that's the case, why silence gives consent.

Miss. But I'm sure it is not so, for I'll speak sooner than you should believe that. And I'll speak truth, though one should always tell a lie to a man, and I don't care, let my father do what he will. I'm too big to be whipped, so I'll tell you plainly I don't like you, nor love you at all, nor never will, that's more. So, there's your answer for you, and don't trouble me no more, you ugly thing.

Ben. Look you, young woman, you may learn to give good words, however. I spoke you fair, d'ye see, and civil. As for your love or your liking, I don't value it of a

rope's end. And mayhap I like you as little as you do me. What I said was in obedience to father. Gad, I fear a whipping no more than you do. But I tell you one thing, if you should give such language at sea, you'd have a cat-o'-ninetails laid across your shoulders. Flesh! who are you? You heard tother handsome young woman speak civilly to me of her own accord. Whatever you think of yourself, gad, I don't think you are any more to compare to her than a can of small-beer to a bowl of punch.

Miss. Well, and there's a handsome gentleman, and a fine gentleman, and a sweet gentleman, that was here that loves me, and I love him. And if he sees you speak to me any more, he'll thrash your jacket for you, he will, you great sea-calf.

Ben. What, do you mean that fair-weather spark that was here just now? Will he thrash my jacket? Let 'n, let 'n. But if an comes near me, mayhap I may give 'n a salt eel for his supper, for all that. What does father mean to leave me alone as soon as I come home with such a dirty dowdy? Sea-calf! I ain't calf enough to lick your chalked face, you cheese-curd, you. Marry thee! 'Oons, I'll marry a Lapland witch as soon, and live upon selling contrary winds, and wrecked vessels.

Miss. I won't be called names, nor I won't be abused thus, so I won't. If I were a man—— [*Cries.*] —you durst not talk at this rate. No, you durst not, you stinking tar-barrel.

Enter MRS. FORESIGHT and MRS. FRAIL.

Mrs. Fore. They have quarrelled, just as we could wish.

Ben. Tar-barrel? Let your sweetheart there call me so, if he'll take your part, your Tom Essence,* and I'll say

* The leading character in a comedy of the same name by Thomas Rawlins (1676).

something to him. Gad, I'll lace his musk-doublet for him! I'll make him stink! He shall smell more like a weasel than a civet-cat, afore I ha' done with 'n.

Mrs. Fore. Bless me, what's the matter, Miss? What, does she cry? Mr. Benjamin, what have you done to her?

Ben. Let her cry. The more she cries, the less she'll—— She has been gathering foul weather in her mouth, and now it rains out at her eyes.

Mrs. Fore. Come, Miss, come along with me, and tell me, poor child.

Mrs. Frail. Lord, what shall we do, there's my brother Foresight and Sir Sampson coming. Sister, do you take Miss down into the parlour, and I'll carry Mr. Benjamin into my chamber. For they must not know that they are fallen out. Come, sir, will you venture yourself with me?

[*Looking kindly on him.*]

Ben. Venture? Mess, and that I will, though 'twere to sea in a storm.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter SIR SAMPSON and FORESIGHT.

Sir Samp. I left 'em together here. What, are they gone? Ben's a brisk boy. He has got her into a corner. Father's own son, faith, he'll tousle her, and mousle her. The rogue's sharp set, coming from sea. If he should not stay for saying grace, old Foresight, but fall to without the help of a parson, ha? Odd, if he should, I could not be angry with him. 'Twould be but like me, a chip of the old block. Ha! thou'rt melancholic, old prognostication, as melancholic as if thou hadst spilt the salt, or pared thy nails on a Sunday. Come, cheer up, look about thee. Look up, old star-gazer. Now is he poring upon the ground for a crooked pin, or an old horse-nail, with the head towards him.

Fore. Sir Sampson, we'll have the wedding to-morrow morning.

Sir Samp. With all my heart.

Fore. At ten o'clock, punctually at ten.

Sir Samp. To a minute, to a second. Thou shall set thy watch, and the bridegroom shall observe its motions. They shall be married to a minute, go to bed to a minute, and when the alarm strikes, they shall keep time, like the figures of St. Dunstan's Clock, and *consummatum est* shall ring all over the parish.

Enter SCANDAL.

Scan. Sir Sampson, sad news.

Fore. Bless us!

Sir Samp. Why, what's the matter?

Scan. Can't you guess at what ought to afflict you and him, and all of us, more than anything else?

Sir Samp. Body o' me, I don't know any universal grievance, but a new tax, or the loss of the Canary Fleet,* unless popery should be landed in the West, or the French fleet were at anchor at Blackwall.

Scan. No. Undoubtedly, Mr. Foresight knew all this, and might have prevented it.

Fore. 'Tis no earthquake!

Scan. No, not yet, nor whirlwind. But we don't know what it may come to. But it has had a consequence already that touches us all.

Sir Samp. Why, body o' me, out with 't.

Scan. Something has appeared to your son Valentine. He's gone to bed upon 't, and very ill. He speaks little, yet he says he has a world to say; asks for his father and the wise Foresight; talks of Raymond Lully, and the ghost of Lilly† He has secrets to impart I suppose to you two. I can get nothing out of him but sighs. He desires he may

* Russell was scouring the Atlantic for the French fleet in 1694.

† Ramon Lull, the medieval philosopher, and William Lilly, who had only died in 1681, were both astrologers.

see you in the morning, but would not be disturbed to-night, because he has some business to do in a dream.

Sir Samp. Hoity-toity, what have I to do with his dreams or his divination? Body o' me, this is a trick to defer signing the conveyance. I warrant the devil will tell him in a dream that he must not part with his estate. But I'll bring him a parson to tell him that the devil's a liar. Or if that won't do, I'll bring a lawyer that shall out-lie the devil. And so I'll try whether my blackguard or his shall get the better of the day. *[Exit.*

Scan. Alas! Mr. Foresight, I'm afraid all is not right. You are a wise man, and a conscientious man, a searcher into obscurity and futurity, and if you commit an error, it is with a great deal of consideration, and discretion, and caution.

Fore. Ah, good, Mr. Scandal——

Scan. Nay, nay, 'tis manifest; I do not flatter you. But Sir Sampson is hasty, very hasty. I'm afraid he is not scrupulous enough, Mr. Foresight. He has been wicked, and Heaven grant he may mean well in his affair with you, but my mind gives me these things cannot be wholly insignificant. You are wise, and should not be overreached, methinks you should not——

Fore. Alas! Mr. Scandal. *Humanum est errare.*

Scan. You say true, man will err, mere man will err; but you are something more. There have been wise men, but they were such as you, men who consulted the stars, and were observers of omens. Solomon was wise, but how? By his judgment in astrology. So says Pineda* in his third book and eighth chapter.

Fore. You are learned, Mr. Scandal.

Scan. A trifle, but a lover of art. And the wise men of the East owed their instruction to a star, which is rightly

* A Spanish polymath (1558–1637).

observed by Gregory the Great in favour of astrology. And Albertus Magnus makes it the most valuable science, because, says he, it teaches us to consider the causation of causes in the causes of things.

Fore. I protest I honour you, Mr. Scandal. I did not think you had been read in these matters. Few young men are inclined——

Scan. I thank my stars that have inclined me. But I fear this marriage and making over this estate, this transferring of a rightful inheritance, will bring judgments upon us. I prophesy it, and I would not have the fate of Cassandra not to be believed. Valentine is disturbed, what can be the cause of that? And Sir Sampson is hurried on by an unusual violence. I fear he does not act wholly from himself. Methinks he does not look as he used to do.

Fore. He was always of an impetuous nature. But as to this marriage I have consulted the stars, and all appearances are prosperous.

Scan. Come, come, Mr. Foresight, let not the prospect of worldly lucre carry you beyond your judgment, nor against your conscience. You are not satisfied that you act justly.

For. How?

Scan. You are not satisfied, I say. I am loath to discourage you. But it is palpable that you are not satisfied.

Fore. How does it appear, Mr. Scandal? I think I am very well satisfied.

Scan. Either you suffer yourself to deceive yourself, or you do not know yourself.

Fore. Pray explain yourself.

Scan. Do you sleep well o' nights?

Fore. Very well.

Scan. Are you certain? You do not look so.

Fore. I am in health, I think.

Scan. So was Valentine this morning, and looked just so.

For. How? Am I altered anyway? I don't perceive it.

Scan. That may be, but your beard is longer than it was two hours ago.

Fore. Indeed! Bless me.

Enter MRS. FORESIGHT.

Mrs. Fore. Husband, will you go to bed? It's ten o'clock. Mr. Scandal, your servant.

Scan. [*aside*]. Pox on her, she has interrupted my design; but I must work her into the project. [*Aloud.*] You keep early hours, madam.

Mrs. Fore. Mr. Foresight is punctual; we sit up after him.

Fore. My dear, pray lend me your glass, your little looking-glass.

Scan. Pray lend it him, madam. I'll tell you the reason, [*She gives him the glass: SCANDAL and she whisper.*] My passion for you is grown so violent that I am no longer master of myself. I was interrupted in the morning, when you had charity enough to give me your attention, and I had hopes of finding another opportunity of explaining myself to you, but was disappointed all this day, and the uneasiness that has attended me ever since brings me now hither at this unseasonable hour.

Mrs. Fore. Was there ever such impudence? To make love to me before my husband's face! I'll swear I'll tell him.

Scan. Do, I'll die a martyr rather than disclaim my passion. But come a little farther this way, and I'll tell you what project I had to get him out of the way, that I might have an opportunity of waiting upon you. [*Whispers.*]

Fore. [*looking in the glass*]. I do not see any revolution here. Methinks I look with a serene and benign aspect,

pale, a little pale, but the roses of these cheeks have been gathered many years. Ha! I do not like that sudden flushing. Gone already! Hem, hem, hem! Faintish. My heart is pretty good; yet it beats, and my pulses? Ha, I have none. Mercy on me! Hum. Yes, here they are: gallop, gallop, gallop, gallop, gallop, gallop. Hey, whither will they hurry me? Now they're gone again, and now I'm faint again, and pale again, and hem, and my hem, breath, hem, grows short. Hem, hem! he, he, hem!

Scan. [*aside to MRS. FORESIGHT*]. It takes. Pursue it in the name of love and pleasure.

Mrs. Fore. How do you do, Mr. Foresight?

Fore. Hum, not so well as I thought I was. Lend me your hand.

Scan. Look you there now. Your lady says your sleep has been unquiet of late.

Fore. Very likely.

Mrs. Fore. Oh, mighty restless, but I was afraid to tell him so. He has been subject to talking and starting.

Scan. And did not use to be so?

Mrs. Fore. Never, never, till within these three nights. I cannot say that he has once broken my rest since we have been married.

Fore. I will go to bed.

Scan. Do so, Mr. Foresight, and say your prayers. He looks better than he did.

Mrs. Fore. [*calls*]. Nurse, Nurse!

Fore. Do you think so, Mr. Scandal?

Scan. Yes, yes, I hope this will be gone by morning, taking it in time.

Fore. I hope so.

Enter NURSE.

Mrs. Fore. Nurse, your master is not well; put him to bed.

Scan. I hope you will be able to see Valentine in the morning. You had best take a little diacodian* and cowslip water, and lie upon your back. Maybe you may dream.

Fore. I thank you, Mr. Scandal, I will. Nurse, let me have a watch-light, and lay "The Crumbs of Comfort"† by me.

Nurse. Yes, sir.

Fore. And—Hem, hem! I am very faint.

Scan. No, no, you look much better.

Fore. Do I? [*To NURSE.*] And, d'y'e hear, bring me, let me see, within a quarter of twelve—hem—he, hem!—just upon the turning of the tide, bring me the urinal. And I hope neither the lord of my ascendant, nor the moon will be combust,‡ and then I may do well.

Scan. I hope so. Leave that to me; I will erect a scheme, and I hope I shall find both Sol and Venus in the sixth house.

Fore. I thank you, Mr. Scandal. Indeed that would be a great comfort to me. Hem, hem, good night.

[*Exit with NURSE.*]

Scan. Good night, good Mr. Foresight. And I hope Mars and Venus will be in conjunction, while your wife and I are together.

Mrs. Fore. Well, and what use do you hope to make of this project? You don't think that you are ever like to succeed in your design upon me?

Scan. Yes, faith, I do. I have a better opinion both of you and myself than to despair.

Mrs. Fore. Did you ever hear such a toad? Harkee, devil, do you think any woman honest?

* A narcotic syrup distilled from poppy-heads.

† A devotional manual compiled by Michael Sparks early in the seventeenth century.

‡ A planet is combust, i.e., without influence, when within eight and a half degrees of the sun.

Scan. Yes, several, very honest. They'll cheat a little at cards sometimes, but that's nothing.

Mrs. Fore. Pshaw! but virtuous, I mean?

Scan. Yes, faith, I believe some women are virtuous too; but 'tis as I believe some men are valiant, through fear. For why should a man court danger, or a woman shun pleasure?

Mrs. Fore. Oh, monstrous! What are conscience and honour?

Scan. Why, honour is a public enemy, and conscience a domestic thief; and he that would secure his pleasure must pay a tribute to one and go halves with the other. As for honour, that you have secured, for you have purchased a perpetual opportunity for pleasure.

Mrs. Fore. An opportunity for pleasure?

Scan. Aye, your husband, a husband is an opportunity for pleasure. So you have taken care of honour, and 'tis the least I can do to take care of conscience.

Mrs. Fore. And so you think we are free for one another?

Scan. Yes, faith, I think so. I love to speak my mind.

Mrs. Fore. Why then, I'll speak my mind. Now as to this affair between you and me. Here you make love to me. Why, I'll confess it does not displease me. Your person is well enough, and your understanding is not amiss.

Scan. I have no great opinion of myself, but I think I'm neither deformed nor a fool.

Mrs. Fore. But you have a villainous character. You are a libertine in speech as well as practice.

Scan. Come, I know what you would say. You think it more dangerous to be seen in conversation with me than to allow some other men the last favour. You mistake. The liberty I take in talking is purely affected for the service of your sex. He that first cries out 'stop thief' is often he that has stolen the treasure. I am a juggler that acts by con-

federacy, and if you please we'll put a trick upon the world.

Mrs. Fore. Aye, but you are such an universal juggler that I'm afraid you have a great many confederates.

Scan. Faith, I'm sound.

Mrs. Fore. Oh, fie, I'll swear you're impudent.

Scan. I'll swear you're handsome.

Mrs. Fore. Pish, you'd tell me so, though you did not think so.

Scan. And you'd think so, though I should not tell you so. And now I think we know one another pretty well.

Mrs. Fore. Oh, Lord, who's here?

Enter MRS. FRAIL and BEN.

Ben. Mess, I love to speak my mind. Father has nothing to do with me. Nay, I can't say that neither, he has something to do with me. But what does that signify? If so be that I ben't minded to be steered by him, 'tis as though he should strive against wind and tide.

Mrs. Frail. Aye, but, my dear, we must keep it secret till the estate be settled. For, you know, marrying without an estate is like sailing in a ship without ballast.

Ben. He, he, he! Why, that's true. Just so for all the world it is indeed, as like as two cable ropes.

Mrs. Frail. And though I have a good portion, you know one would not venture all in one bottom.

Ben. Why, that's true again, for mayhap one bottom may spring a leak. You have hit it indeed, mess, you've nicked the channel.

Mrs. Frail. Well, but if you should forsake me after all, you'd break my heart.

Ben. Break your heart? I'd rather the Marigold should break her cable in a storm, as well as I love her. Flesh, you don't think I'm false-hearted, like a land-man. A sailor will be honest, though mayhap he has never a penny of

money in his pocket. Mayhap I may not have so fair a face as a citizen or a courtier, but for all that I've as good blood in my veins, and a heart as sound as a biscuit.

Mrs. Frail. And will you love me always?

Ben. Nay, if I love once, I'll stick like pitch. I'll tell you what, come, I'll sing you a song of a sailor.

Mrs. Frail. Hold, there's my sister. I'll call her to hear it.

Mrs. Fore. Well, I won't go to bed to my husband to-night, because I'll retire to my own chamber, and think of what you have said.

Scan. Well, you'll give me leave to wait upon you to your chamber door, and leave you my last instructions?

Mrs. Fore. Hold, here's my sister coming towards us.

Mrs. Frail. If it won't interrupt you, I'll entertain you with a song.

Ben. The song was made upon one of our ship's-crew's wife. Our boatswain made the song. Mayhap you may know her, sir? Before she was married, she was called Buxom Joan of Deptford.

Scan. I have heard of her.

Ben [sings]. A soldier and a sailor,
A tinker and a tailor,
Had once a doubtful strife, sir,
To make a maid a wife, sir,
Whose name was Buxom Joan.
For now the time was ended,
When she no more intended,
To lick her lips at men, sir,
And gnaw the sheets in vain, sir,
And lie o' nights alone.

The soldier swore like thunder
He loved her more than plunder,
And showed her many a scar, sir,

That he had brought from far, sir,
 With fighting for her sake.
 The tailor thought to please her,
 With offering her his measure.
 The tinker, too, with mettle,
 Said he could mend her kettle,
 And stop up every leak.

But while these three were prating,
 The sailor slyly waiting
 Thought if it came about, sir,
 That they should all fall out, sir,
 He then might play his part.
 And just e'en as he meant, sir,
 To loggerheads they went, sir,
 And then he let fly at her
 A shot 'twixt wind and water,
 That won this fair maid's heart.

If some of our crew that came to see me are not gone, you shall see that we sailors can dance sometimes, as well as other folks. [*Whistles.*] I warrant that brings 'em, an they be within hearing. [*Enter SEAMEN.*] Oh, here they be, and fiddles along with 'em. Come, my lads, let's have a round, and I'll make one. [*Dance.*] We're merry folks, we sailors, we ha'n't much to care for. Thus we live at sea: eat biscuit and drink flip,* put on a clean shirt once a quarter, come home, and lie with our landladies once a year, get rid of a little money, and then put off with the next fair wind. How d'ye like us?

Mrs. Frail. Oh, you are the happiest, merriest men alive.

Mrs. Fore. We're beholden to Mr. Benjamin for this entertainment. I believe it's late.

Ben. Why, forsooth, an you think so you had best go to

* A mixture of beer and spirit sweetened and heated.

bed. For my part, I mean to toss a can, and remember my sweetheart, afore I turn in. Mayhap I may dream of her

Mrs. Fore. Mr. Scandal, you had best go to bed and dream too.

Scan. Why, faith, I have a good lively imagination, and can dream as much to the purpose as another, if I set about it. But dreaming is the poor retreat of a lazy, hopeless, and imperfect lover; 'tis the last glimpse of love to worn-out sinners, and the faint dawning of a bliss to wishing girls, and growing boys.

There's nought but willing, waking love, that can
Make blest the ripened maid and finished man.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV

Scene I—VALENTINE'S *Lodging.*

Enter SCANDAL and JEREMY.

Scan. Well, is your master ready? Does he look madly, and talk madly?

Jer. Yes, sir: you need make no great doubt of that. He that was so near turning poet yesterday morning can't be much to seek in playing the madman to-day.

Scan. Would he have Angelica acquainted with the reason of his design?

Jer. No, sir, not yet. He has a mind to try whether his playing the madman won't make her play the fool and fall in love with him, or at least own that she has loved him all this while, and concealed it.

Scan. I saw her take coach just now with her maid, and think I heard her bid the coachman drive hither.

Jer. Like enough, sir, for I told her maid this morning my master was run stark mad only for love of her mistress.

I hear a coach stop. If it should be she, sir, I believe he would not see her, till he hears how she takes it.

Scan. Well, I'll try her. 'Tis she; here she comes.

Enter ANGELICA with JENNY.

Ang. Mr. Scandal, I suppose you don't think it a novelty to see a woman visit a man at his own lodgings in a morning?

Scan. Not upon a kind occasion, madam. But when a lady comes tyrannically to insult a ruined lover, and make manifest the cruel triumphs of her beauty, the barbarity of it something surprises me.

Ang. I don't like raillery from a serious face. Pray tell me what is the matter?

Fer. No strange matter, madam. My master's mad, that's all. I suppose your ladyship has thought him so a great while?

Ang. How d'ye mean, mad?

Fer. Why, faith, madam, he's mad for want of his wits, just as he was poor for want of money. His head is e'en as light as his pockets, and anybody that has a mind to a bad bargain can't do better than to beg him for his estate.

Ang. If you speak truth, your endeavouring at wit is very unseasonable.

Scan. [*aside*]. She's concerned, and loves him.

Ang. Mr. Scandal, you can't think me guilty of so much inhumanity as not to be concerned for a man I must own myself obliged to. Pray tell me truth.

Scan. Faith, madam, I wish telling a lie would mend the matter. But this is no new effect of an unsuccessful passion.

Ang. [*aside*]. I know not what to think. Yet I should be vexed to have a trick put upon me. [*Aloud.*] May I not see him?

Scan. I'm afraid the physician is not willing you should see him yet. Jeremy, go in and enquire.

[*Exit* JEREMY.]

Ang. [*aside*]. Ha! I saw him wink and smile. I fancy 'tis a trick. I'll try. [*Aloud.*] I would disguise to all the world a failing, which I must own to you. I fear my happiness depends upon the recovery of Valentine. Therefore, I conjure you, as you are his friend, and as you have compassion upon one fearful of affliction, to tell me what I am to hope for. I cannot speak, but you may tell me. Tell me, for you know what I would ask.

Scan. [*aside*]. So, this is pretty plain. [*Aloud.*] Be not too much concerned, madam; I hope his condition is not desperate. An acknowledgment of love from you, perhaps, may work a cure, as the fear of your aversion occasioned his distemper.

Ang. [*aside*]. Say you so? Nay, then, I'm convinced, and if I don't play trick for trick, may I never taste the pleasure of revenge. [*Aloud.*] Acknowledgment of love! I find you have mistaken my compassion, and think me guilty of a weakness I am a stranger to. But I have too much sincerity to deceive you, and too much charity to suffer him to be deluded with vain hopes. Good nature and humanity oblige me to be concerned for him, but to love is neither in my power nor inclination, and if he can't be cured without I suck the poison from his wounds, I'm afraid he won't recover his senses till I lose mine.

Scan. [*aside*]. Hey, brave woman, i'faith. [*Aloud.*] Won't you see him then, if he desire it?

Ang. What signifies a madman's desires? Besides, 'twould make me uneasy. If I don't see him, perhaps my concern for him may lessen. If I forget him, 'tis no more than he has done by himself; and now the surprise is over, methinks I am not half so sorry as I was.

Scan. So, faith, good nature works apace. You were confessing just now an obligation to his love.

Ang. But I have considered that passions are unreasonable and involuntary. If he loves, he can't help it, and if I don't love, I can't help it; no more than he can help his being a man, or I my being a woman; or no more than I can help my want of inclination to stay longer here. Come, Jenny.

[*Exeunt ANGELICA and JENNY.*]

Scan. Humph! An admirable composition, faith, this same womankind.

Enter JEREMY.

Fer. What, is she gone, sir?

Scan. Gone? Why she was never here, nor anywhere else, nor I don't know her if I see her, nor you neither.

Fer. Good lack! What's the matter now? Are any more of us to be mad? Why, sir, my master longs to see her, and is almost mad in good earnest with the joyful news of her being here.

Scan. We are all under a mistake. Ask no questions, for I can't resolve you; but I'll inform your master. In the meantime, if our project succeed no better with his father, than it does with his mistress, he may descend from his exaltation of madness into the road of common sense, and be content only to be made a fool with other reasonable people. I hear Sir Sampson. You know your cue; I'll go to your master.

[*Exit.*]

Enter SIR SAMPSON LEGEND with a LAWYER.

Sir Samp. D'ye see, Mr. Buckram, here's the paper signed with his own hand.

Buck. Good, sir. And the conveyance is ready drawn in this box, if he be ready to sign and seal.

Sir Samp. Ready, body o' me, he must be ready. His

sham sickness shan't excuse him. Oh, here's his scoundrel. Sirrah, where's your master?

Fer. Ah, sir, he's quite gone.

Sir Samp. Gone! What, he is not dead?

Fer. No, sir, not dead.

Sir Samp. What, is he gone out of town, run away, ha? Has he tricked me? Speak, varlet.

Fer. No, no, sir, he's safe enough, sir, an he were but as sound, poor gentleman. He is indeed here, sir, and not here, sir.

Sir Samp. Hey-day, rascal, do you banter me? Sirrah, d'ye banter me? Speak, sirrah, where is he, for I will find him?

Fer. Would you could, sir, for he has lost himself. Indeed, sir, I have almost broke my heart about him. I can't refrain tears when I think of him, sir. I'm as melancholy for him as a passing-bell, sir, or a horse in a pound.

Sir Samp. A pox confound your similitudes, sir. Speak to be understood, and tell me in plain terms what the matter is with him, or I'll crack your fool's scull.

Fer. Ah, you've hit it, sir. That's the matter with him, sir. His skull's cracked, poor gentleman; he's stark mad, sir.

Sir Samp. Mad!

Buck. What, is he *non compos*?

Fer. Quite *non compos*, sir.

Buck. Why then all's obliterated, Sir Sampson, if he be *non compos mentis*, his act and deed will be of no effect; it is not good in law.

Sir Samp. Oons, I won't believe it. Let me see him, sir. Mad! I'll make him find his senses.

Fer. Mr. Scandal is with him, sir; I'll knock at the door.
[*Goes to the scene, which opens and discovers VALENTINE upon a couch disorderly dressed: SCANDAL by him.*]

Sir Samp. How now, what's here to do?

Val. [*starting*]. Ha! Who's that?

Scan. For Heaven's sake softly, sir, and gently. Don't provoke him.

Val. Answer me. Who is that? And that?

Sir Samp. Gads-bobs, does he not know me? Is he mischievous? I'll speak gently. Val, Val, dost thou not know me, boy? Not know thy own father, Val? I am thy own father, and this is honest Brief Buckram, the lawyer.

Val. It may be so. I did not know you. The world is full. There are people that we do know, and people that we do not know; and yet the sun shines upon all alike. There are fathers that have many children, and there are children that have many fathers. 'Tis strange! But I am truth, and come to give the world the lie.

Sir Samp. Body o' me, I know not what to say to him.

Val. Why does that lawyer were black? Does he carry his conscience without-side? Lawyer, what art thou? Dost thou know me?

Buck. Oh Lord, what must I say? Yes, sir.

Val. Thou liest, for I am truth. 'Tis hard I cannot get a livelihood amongst you. I have been sworn out of Westminster Hall* the first day of every term. Let me see—— No matter how long. But I'll tell you one thing; it's a question that would puzzle an arithmetician, if you should ask him, whether the Bible saves more souls in Westminster Abbey, or damns more in Westminster Hall. For my part, I am truth, and can't tell; I have very few acquaintance.

Sir Samp. Body o' me, he talks sensibly in his madness. Has he no intervals?

Fer. Very short, sir.

Buck. Sir, I can do you no service while he's in this condition. Here's your paper, sir. He may do me a mischief if I

* Then the law courts.

stay. The conveyance is ready, sir, if he recover his senses.

[*Exit.*]

Sir Samp. Hold, hold, don't you go yet.

Scan. You'd better let him go, sir, and send for him if there be occasion, for I fancy his presence provokes him more.

Val. Is the lawyer gone? 'Tis well, then we may drink about without going together by the ears. Heigh-ho! What o'clock is 't? My father here? Your blessing, sir.

Sir Samp. He recovers. Bless thee, Val. How dost thou do, boy?

Val. Thank you, sir, pretty well. I have been a little out of order. Won't you please to sit, sir?

Sir Samp. Aye, boy. Come, thou shalt sit down by me.

Val. Sir, 'tis my duty to wait.

Sir Samp. No, no; come, come, sit thee down, honest Val. How dost thou do? Let me feel thy pulse. Oh, pretty well now, Val. Body o' me, I was sorry to see thee indisposed; but I am glad thou art better, honest Val.

Val. I thank you, sir.

Scan. [*aside*]. Miracle! the monster grows loving.

Sir Samp. Let me feel thy hand again, Val. It does not shake. I believe thou canst write, Val, ha, boy? Thou canst write thy name, Val? [*In whisper to JEREMY.*] Jeremy, step and overtake Mr. Buckram. Bid him make haste back with the conveyance, quick, quick. [*Exit JEREMY.*]

Scan. [*aside*]. That ever I should suspect such a heathen of any remorse!

Sir Samp. Dost thou know this paper, Val? I know thou'rt honest, and will perform articles.

[*Shows him the paper, but holds it out of his reach.*]

Val. Pray, let me see it, sir. You hold it so far off that I can't tell whether I know it or no.

Sir Samp. See it, boy? Aye, aye, why thou dost see it.

'Tis thy own hand, Vally. Why, let me see, I can read it as plain as can be. Look you here. [*Reads.*] "The condition of this obligation." Look you, as plain as can be, so it begins. And then at the bottom. "As witness my hand, VALENTINE LEGEND," in great letters. Why, 'tis as plain as the nose in one's face. What, are my eyes better than thine? I believe I can read it farther off yet. Let me see. [*Stretches his arm as far as he can.*]

Val. Will you please to let me hold it, sir?

Sir Samp. Let thee hold it, sayest thou? Aye, with all my heart. What matter is it who holds it? What need anybody hold it? I'll put it up in my pocket, Val and then nobody need hold it. [*Puts the paper in his pocket.*] There, Val, it's safe enough, boy. But thou shalt have it as soon as thou hast set thy hand to another paper, little Val.

Re-enter JEREMY with BUCKRAM.

Val. What, is my bad genius here again? Oh no, 'tis the lawyer with an itching palm, and he's come to be scratched. My nails are not long enough. Let me have a pair of red-hot tongs quickly, quickly, and you shall see me act St. Dunstan, and lead the devil by the nose.

Buck. Oh, Lord, let me be gone; I'll not venture myself with a madman. [*Exit BUCKRAM.*]

Val. Ha, ha, ha! you need not run so fast. Honesty will not overtake you. Ha, ha, ha! the rogue found me out to be in *forma pauperis* presently.

Sir Samp. Oons! What a vexation is here! I know not what to do or say, nor which way to go.

Val. Who's that, that's out of his way? I am truth, and can set him right. Harkee, friend, the straight road is the worst way you can go. He that follows his nose always will very often be led into a stink. *Probatum est.* But what are you for, religion or politics? There's a couple of topics for

you, no more like one another than oil and vinegar, and yet those two beaten together by a state-cook make sauce for the whole nation.

Sir Samp. What the devil had I to do, ever to beget sons? Why did I ever marry?

Val. Because thou wert a monster, old boy. The two greatest monsters in the world are a man and a woman. What's thy opinion?

Sir Samp. Why, my opinion is that those two monsters joined together make yet a greater, that's a man and his wife.

Val. Aha! Old Truepenny, sayest thou so? Thou hast nicked it. But it's wonderful strange, Jeremy.

Jer. What is, sir?

Val. That grey hairs should cover a green head, and I make a fool of my father. [*Enter FORESIGHT, MRS. FORESIGHT, and MRS. FRAIL.*] What's here! Erra Pater,* or a bearded Sybil? If prophecy comes truth must give place.

[*Exit with JEREMY.*]

Fore. What says he? What, did he prophesy? Ha, Sir Sampson, bless us! How are we?

Sir Samp. Are we? A pox on your prognostications. Why, we are fools as we use to be. Oons, that you could not foresee that the moon would predominate, and my son be mad. Where's your oppositions, your trines, and your quadrates? What did your Cardan† and your Ptolomy tell you? Your Messahalal and your Longomontanus,‡ your harmony of chiromancy with astrology. Ah! pox on't that I that know the world, and men and manners, that don't believe a syllable in the sky and stars, and sun and almanacs, and trash, should be directed by a dreamer, an

* A fabulous astrologer who gave his name to numerous almanacs.

† Girolamo Cardan (1501-1576), mathematician and occultist.

‡ Christian Langborg (1562-1647), a disciple of Tycho Brahe.

omen-hunter, and defer business in expectation of a lucky hour. When, body o' me, there never was a lucky hour after the first opportunity.

[Exit SIR SAMPSON.]

Fore. Ah, Sir Sampson, Heaven help your head. This is none of your lucky hour; *nemo omnibus horis sapit*. What, is he gone, and in contempt of science? Ill stars and unconvertible ignorance attend him!

Scan. You must excuse his passion, Mr. Foresight, for he has been heartily vexed. His son is *non compos mentis*, and thereby incapable of making any conveyance in law; so that all his measures are disappointed.

Fore. Ha! say you so?

Mrs. Frail [aside to MRS. FORESIGHT]. What, has my sea-lover lost his anchor of hope then?

Mrs. Fore. Oh, sister, what will you do with him?

Mrs. Frail. Do with him? Send him to sea again in the next foul weather. He's used to an inconstant element, and won't be surprised to see the tide turned.

Fore. [considers]. Wherein was I mistaken, not to foresee this?

Scan. [aside to MRS. FORESIGHT]. Madam, you and I can tell him something else that he did not foresee, and more particularly relating to his own fortune.

Mrs. Fore. What do you mean? I don't understand you.

Scan. Hush, softly. The pleasures of last night, my dear, too considerable to be forgot so soon.

Mrs. Fore. Last night! And what would your impudence infer from last night? Last night was like the night before, I think.

Scan. 'Sdeath, do you make no difference between me and your husband?

Mrs. Fore. Not much: he's superstitious, and you are mad, in my opinion.

Scan. You make me mad. You are not serious. Pray, recollect yourself.

Mrs. Fore. Oh yes, now I remember. You were very impertinent and impudent, and would have come to bed to me.

Scan. And did not?

Mrs. Fore. Did not? With what face can you ask the question?

Scan. [*aside*]. This I have heard of before, but never believed. I have been told she had that admirable quality of forgetting to a man's face in the morning that she had lain with him all night, and denying that she had done favours with more impudence than she could grant 'em. Madam, I'm your humble servant, and honour you. [*Aloud.*] You look pretty well, Mr. Foresight. How did you rest last night?

Fore. Truly, Mr. Scandal, I was so taken up with broken dreams and distracted visions, that I remember little.

Scan. 'Twas a very forgetting night. But would you not talk with Valentine? Perhaps you may understand him. I'm apt to believe there is something mysterious in his discourses, and sometimes rather think him inspired than mad.

Fore. You speak with singular good judgment, Mr. Scandal, truly. I am inclining to your Turkish opinion in this matter, and do reverence a man whom the vulgar think mad. Let us go to him.

Mrs. Frail. Sister, do you stay with them; I'll find out my lover and give him his discharge, and come to you. O' my conscience, here he comes.

[*Exeunt* FORESIGHT, MRS. FORESIGHT and SCANDAL.]

Enter BEN.

Ben. All mad, I think. Flesh, I believe all the Calen-
tures of the sea* are come ashore, for my part.

* A delirious fever common at sea in hot latitudes.

Mrs. Frail. Mr. Benjamin in choler?

Ben. No, I'm pleased well enough, now I have found you. Mess, I have had such a hurricane upon your account yonder.

Mrs. Frail. My account! Pray, what's the matter?

Ben. Why, father came and found me squabbling with yon chitty-faced thing, as he would have me marry, so he asked what was the matter? He asked in a surly sort of a way. It seems brother Val. is gone mad, and so that put 'n into a passion; but what, did I know that, what's that to me? So he asked in a surly sort of manner, and, gad, I answered 'n as surlily. What thof he be my father, I ain't bound 'prentice to 'n. So, faith, I told 'n in plain terms, if I were minded to marry, I'd marry to please myself, not him. And for the young woman that he provided for me, I thought it more fitting for her to learn her sampler, and make dirt pies, than to look after a husband. For my part I was none of her man. I had another voyage to make, let him take it as he will.

Mrs. Frail. So then, you intend to go to sea again?

Ben. Nay, nay, my mind run upon you, but I would not tell him so much. So he said he'd make my heart ache, and if so be that he could get a woman to his mind, he'd marry himself. Gad, says I, an you play the fool and marry at these years, there's more danger of your head's aching than my heart. He was woundy angry when I gave 'n that wipe. He hadn't a word to say, and so I left 'n and the green girl together. Mayhap the bee may bite, and he'll marry her himself, with all my heart.

Mrs. Frail. And were you this undutiful and graceless wretch to your father?

Ben. Then why was he graceless first? If I am undutiful and graceless, why did he beget me so? I did not get myself.

Mrs. Frail. Oh, impiety! How have I been mistaken!

What an inhuman, merciless creature have I set my heart upon! Oh, I am happy to have discovered the shelves and quicksands that lurk beneath that faithless smiling face.

Ben. Hey, toss! What's the matter now? Why, you ben't angry, be you?

Mrs. Frail. Oh, see me no more, for thou wert born amongst rocks, suckled by whales, cradled in a tempest, and whistled to by winds; and thou art come forth with fins and scales, and three rows of teeth, a most outrageous fish of prey.

Ben. Oh Lord, oh Lord! She's mad, poor young woman. Love has turned her senses, her brain is quite over-set. Well-a-day, how shall I do to set her to rights?

Mrs. Frail. No, no, I am not mad, monster. I am wise enough to find you out. Hadst thou the impudence to aspire at being a husband with that stubborn and disobedient temper? You, that know not how to submit to a father, presume to have sufficient stock of duty to undergo a wife! I should have been finely fobbed indeed, very finely fobbed.

Ben. Harkee, forsooth. If so be that you are in your right senses, d'ye see, for ought as I perceive, I'm like to be finely fobbed, if I have got anger here upon your account, and you are tacked about already. What d'ye mean, after all your fair speeches, and stroking my cheeks, and kissing and hugging? What, would you sheer off so, would you, and leave me aground?

Mrs. Frail. No, I'll leave you adrift, and go which way you will.

Ben. What, are you false-hearted then?

Mrs. Frail. Only the wind's changed.

Ben. More shame for you! The wind's changed? It's an ill wind blows nobody good. Mayhap I have a good rid-

dance on you, if these be your tricks. What did you mean all this while? To make a fool of me?

Mrs. Frail. Any fool, but a husband.

Ben. Husband! Gad, I would not be your husband if you would have me, now I know your mind, thof you had your weight in gold and jewels, and thof I loved you never so well.

Mrs. Frail. Why, canst thou love, porpoise?

Ben. No matter what I can do, don't call names. I don't love you so well as to bear that, whatever I did. I'm glad you show yourself, mistress. Let them marry you as don't know you. Gad, I know you too well, by sad experience. I believe he that marries you will go to sea in a henpecked frigate. I believe that, young woman, and mayhap may come to an anchor at Cuckold's Point.* So there's a dash for you, take it as you will. Mayhap you may hello after me when I won't come to. [Exit.]

Mrs. Frail. Ha, ha, ha! no doubt on't. [Sings.]

My true love is gone to sea.

Enter MRS. FORESIGHT.

Mrs. Frail. Oh, sister, had you come a minute sooner, you would have seen the resolution of a lover. Honest Tar and I are parted; and with the same indifference that we met. O' my life I am half vexed at the insensibility of a brute that I despised.

Mrs. Fore. What, then, he bore it most heroically?

Mrs. Frail. Most tyrannically, for you see he has got the start of me, and I, the poor forsaken maid, am left complaining on the shore. But I'll tell you a hint that he has given me. Sir Sampson is enraged, and talks desperately of committing matrimony himself. If he has a mind to throw

* A headland a little below Rotherhithe.

himself away, he can't do it more effectually than upon me, if we could bring it about.

Mrs. Fore. Oh, hang him, old fox! He's too cunning; besides, he hates both you and me. But I have a project in my head for you, and I have gone a good way towards it. I have almost made a bargain with Jeremy, Valentine's man, to sell his master to us.

Mrs. Frail. Sell him, how?

Mrs. Fore. Valentine raves upon Angelica, and took me for her, and Jeremy says will take anybody for her that he imposes on him. Now I have promised him mountains, if in one of his mad fits he will bring you to him in her stead, and get you married together, and put to bed together, and after consummation, girl, there's no revoking. And if he should recover his senses, he'll be glad at least to make you a good settlement. Here they come. Stand aside a little, and tell me how you like the design.

Enter VALENTINE, SCANDAL, FORESIGHT and JEREMY.

Scan. [*to JEREMY*]. And have you given your master a hint of their plot upon him?

Fer. Yes, sir; he says he'll favour it, and mistake her for Angelica.

Scan. It may make us sport.

Fore. Mercy on us!

Val. Hush. Interrupt me not. I'll whisper prediction to thee, and thou shalt prophesy. I am truth, and can teach thy tongue a new trick. I have told thee what's past. Now I'll tell what's to come. Dost thou know what will happen to-morrow? Answer me not, for I will tell thee. To-morrow knaves will thrive through craft, and fools through fortune; and honesty will go as it did, frost-nipped in a summer suit. Ask me questions concerning to-morrow.

Scan. Ask him, Mr. Foresight.

Fore. Pray, what will be done at court?

Val. Scandal will tell you. I am truth; I never come there.

Fore. In the city?

Val. Oh, prayers will be said in empty churches at the usual hours. Yet you will see such zealous faces behind counters, as if religion were to be sold in every shop. Oh, things will go methodically in the city: the clocks will strike twelve at noon, and the horned herd buzz in the Exchange at two. Wives and husbands will drive distinct trades, and care and pleasure separately occupy the family. Coffee houses will be full of smoke and stratagem, and the cropped apprentice, that sweeps his master's shop in the morning, may ten to one dirty his sheets before night. But there are two things that you will see very strange: which are wanton wives, with their legs at liberty, and tame cuckolds, with chains about their necks. But hold, I must examine you before I go further. You look suspiciously. Are you a husband?

Fore. I am married.

Val. Poor creature! Is your wife of Covent Garden parish?

Fore. No: St. Martin's-in-the-Fields.

Val. Alas! poor man! His eyes are sunk, and his hands shrivelled, his legs dwindled and his back bowed. Pray, pray for a metamorphosis. Change thy shape, and shake off age; get thee Medea's kettle, and be boiled anew; come forth with labouring callous hands, a chine of steel, and Atlas' shoulders. Let Taliacotius* trim the calves of twenty chairmen, and make thee pedestals to stand erect upon, and look matrimony in the face. Ha, ha, ha! That a man should have a stomach to a wedding supper, when the pigeons ought rather to be laid to his feet!† Ha, ha, ha!

* Gaspare Togliacozzi (1546-99), a famous surgeon.

† An accepted remedy for the plague.

Fore. His frenzy is very high now, Mr. Scandal.

Scan. I believe it is a spring tide.

Fore. Very likely truly. You understand these matters, Mr. Scandal. I shall be very glad to confer with you about these things which he has uttered. His sayings are very mysterious and hieroglyphical.

Val. Oh, why would Angelica be absent from my eyes so long?

Jer. She's here, sir.

Mrs. Fore. Now, sister.

Mrs. Frail. Oh Lord, what must I say?

Scan. Humour him, madam, by all means.

Val. Where is she? Oh, I see her. She comes, like riches, health and liberty at once, to a despairing, starving, and abandoned wretch. Oh, welcome, welcome.

Mrs. Frail. How d'ye do, sir? Can I serve you?

Val. Harkee. I have a secret to tell you. Endymion and the moon shall meet us upon Mount Latmos, and we'll be married in the dead of night. But say not a word. Hymen shall put his torch into a dark lantern, that it may be secret; and Juno shall give her peacock poppy-water, that he may fold his ogling tail, and Argus's hundred eyes be shut. Ha? Nobody shall know, but Jeremy.

Mrs. Frail. No, no, we'll keep it secret; it shall be done presently.

Val. The sooner the better. Jeremy, come hither, closer, that none may overhear us. Jeremy, I can tell you news. Angelica is turned nun, and I am turning friar, and yet we'll marry one another in spite of the Pope. Get me a cowl and beads, that I may play my part, for she'll meet me two hours hence in black and white, and a long veil to cover the project, and we won't see one another's faces till we have done something to be ashamed of; and then we'll blush once for all.

Enter TATTLE and ANGELICA.

Fer. I'll take care, and——

Val. Whisper.

Ang. Nay, Mr. Tattle, if you make love to me, you spoil my design, for I intend to make you my confidant.

Tat. But, madam, to throw away your person, such a person! and such a fortune on a madman!

Ang. I never loved him till he was mad; but don't tell anybody so.

Scan. [*aside*]. How's this? Tattle making love to Angelica!

Tat. Tell, madam? Alas! you don't know me. I have much ado to tell your ladyship how long I have been in love with you; but encouraged by the impossibility of Valentine's making any more addresses to you, I have ventured to declare the very inmost passion of my heart. Oh, madam, look upon us both. There you see the ruins of a poor decayed creature. Here, a complete and lively figure, with youth and health, and all his five senses in perfection, madam, and to all this, the most passionate lover.

Ang. Oh, fie, for shame, hold your tongue. A passionate lover, and five senses in perfection! When you are as mad as Valentine, I'll believe you love me, and the maddest shall take me.

Val. It is enough. Ha! Who's here?

Mrs. Frail [*to JEREMY*]. Oh Lord, her coming will spoil all.

Fer. No, no, madam, he won't know her; if he should, I can persuade him.

Val. Scandal, who are these? Foreigners? If they are, I'll tell you what I think. [*Whispers.*] Get away all the company but Angelica, that I may discover my design to her.

Scan. [*whispers*]. I will. I have discovered something of

Tattle, that is of a piece with Mrs. Frail. He courts Angelica. If we could contrive to couple 'em together? Harkee——

Mrs. Fore. He won't know you, cousin, he knows nobody.

Fore. But he knows more than anybody. Oh, niece, he knows things past and to come, and all the profound secrets of time.

Tat. Look you, Mr. Foresight, it is not my way to make many words of matters, and so I shan't say much, but in short, d'ye see, I will hold you a hundred pound now that I know more secrets than he.

Fore. How? I cannot read that knowledge in your face, Mr. Tattle. Pray, what do you know?

Tat. Why, d'ye think I'll tell you, sir? Read it in my face! No, sir, 'tis written in my heart; and safer there, sir, than letters written in juice of lemon, for no fire can fetch it out. I am no blab, sir.

Val. [*to SCANDAL*]. Acquaint Jeremy with it. He may easily bring it about. They are welcome, and I'll tell 'em so myself. [*Aloud.*] What, do you look strange upon me? Then I must be plain. [*Coming up to them.*] I am truth, and hate an old acquaintance with a new face.

[*SCANDAL goes aside with JEREMY.*]

Tat. Do you know me, Valentine?

Val. You? Who are you? No, I hope not.

Tat. I am Jack Tattle, your friend.

Val. My friend, what to do? I am no married man, and thou canst not lie with my wife; I am very poor, and thou canst not borrow money of me. Then what employment have I for a friend?

Tat. Ha! A good open speaker, and not to be trusted with a secret.

Ang. Do you know me, Valentine?

Val. Oh, very well.

Ang. Who am I?

Val. You're a woman; one to whom Heaven gave beauty, when it grafted roses on a briar. You are the reflection of Heaven in a pond, and he that leaps at you is sunk. You are all white, a sheet of lovely spotless paper, when you first are born; but you are to be scrawled and blotted by every goose's quill. I know you; for I loved a woman, and loved her so long, that I found out a strange thing: I found out what a woman was good for.

Tat. Aye, prithee, what's that?

Val. Why, to keep a secret.

Tat. Oh Lord!

Val. Oh, exceeding good to keep a secret. For though she should tell, yet she is not to be believed.

Tat. Ha! good again, faith.

Val. I would have music. Sing me the song that I like.

I tell thee, Charmion, could I time retrieve,
And could again begin to love and live,
To you I should my earliest offering give;
I know my eyes would lead my heart to you,
And I should all my vows and oaths renew,
But, to be plain, I never would be true.

For by our weak and weary truth, I find,
Love hates to centre in a point assigned,
But runs with joy the circle of the mind.
Then never let us chain what should be free,
But for relief of either sex agree,
Since women love to change, and so do we.

No more, for I am melancholy. [*Walks, musing.*]

Fer. [to SCANDAL]. I'll do it, sir.

Scan. Mr. Foresight, we had best leave him. He may grow outrageous, and do mischief.

Fore. I will be directed by you.

Fer. [*to* MRS. FRAIL]. You'll meet, madam? I'll take care everything shall be ready.

Mrs. Frail Thou shalt do what thou wilt; in short, I will deny thee nothing.

Tat. [*to* ANGELICA]. Madam, shall I wait upon you?

Ang. No, I'll stay with him. Mr. Scandal will protect me. Aunt, Mr. Tattle desires you would give him leave to wait on you.

Tat. [*aside*]. Pox on't, there's no coming off, now she has said that. [*Aloud.*] Madam, will you do me the honour?

Mrs. Fore. Mr. Tattle might have used less ceremony.
[*Exeunt* FORESIGHT, MRS. FRAIL, MRS. FORESIGHT,
TATTLE and JEREMY.]

Scan. Jeremy, follow Tattle.

Ang. Mr. Scandal, I only stay till my maid comes, and because I had a mind to be rid of Mr. Tattle.

Scan. Madam, I am very glad that I overheard a better reason, which you gave to Mr. Tattle; for his impertinence forced you to acknowledge a kindness for Valentine, which you denied to all his sufferings and my solicitations. So I'll leave him to make use of the discovery, and your ladyship to the free confession of your inclinations.

Ang. Oh heavens! You won't leave me alone with a madman?

Scan. No, madam; I only leave a madman to his remedy.
[*Exit* SCANDAL.]

Val. Madam, you need not be very much afraid, for I fancy I begin to come to myself.

Ang. [*aside*]. Aye, but if I don't fit you, I'll be hanged.

Val. You see what disguises love makes us put on. Gods have been in counterfeited shapes for the same reason, and the divine part of me, my mind, has worn this mask of mad-

ness, and this motley livery, only as the slave of love, and menial creature of your beauty.

Ang. Mercy on me, how he talks, poor Valentine!

Val. Nay, faith, now let us understand one another, hypocrisy apart. The comedy draws toward an end, and let us think of leaving acting, and be ourselves; and since you have loved me, you must own I have at length deserved you should confess it.

Ang. [*sighs*]. I would I had loved you, for Heaven knows I pity you; and could I have foreseen the bad effects, I would have striven. But that's too late. [*Sighs.*]

Val. What bad effects? What's too late? My seeming madness has deceived my father, and procured me time to think of means to reconcile me to him, and preserve the right of my inheritance to his estate, which otherwise by articles I must this morning have resigned. And this I had informed you of to-day, but you were gone, before I knew you had been here.

Ang. How? I thought your love of me had caused this transport in your soul, which, it seems, you only counterfeited for mercenary ends, and sordid interest.

Val. Nay, now you do me wrong, for if any interest was considered it was yours, since I thought I wanted more than love to make me worthy of you.

Ang. Then you thought me mercenary. But how am I deluded by this interval of sense to reason with a madman?

Val. Oh, 'tis barbarous to misunderstand me longer.

Enter JEREMY.

Ang. Oh, here's a reasonable creature. Sure he will not have the impudence to persevere. Come, Jeremy, acknowledge your trick, and confess your master's madness counterfeit.

Fer. Counterfeit, madam? I'll maintain him to be as

absolutely and substantially mad as any freeholder in Bethlehem.* Nay, he's as mad as any projector, fanatic, chemist, lover, or poet in Europe.

Val. Sirrah, you lie. I am not mad.

Ang. Ha, ha, ha! You see he denies it.

Fer. Oh, Lord, madam, did you ever know any madman mad enough to own it?

Val. Sot, can't you apprehend?

Ang. Why, he talked very sensibly just now.

Fer. Yes, madam, he has intervals; but you see he begins to look wild again now.

Val. Why, you thick-skulled rascal, I tell you the farce is done, and I will be mad no longer. *[Beats him.]*

Ang. Ha, ha, ha! Is he mad or no, Jeremy?

Fer. Partly, I think, for he does not know his own mind two hours. I'm sure I left him just now in the humour to be mad. And I think I have not found him very quiet at this present. *[One knocks.]* Who's there?

Val. Go see, you sot. I'm very glad that I can move your mirth, though not your compassion. *[Exit JEREMY.]*

Ang. I did not think you had apprehension enough to be exceptionous. But madmen show themselves most, by over-pretending to a sound understanding, as drunken men do by over-acting sobriety. I was half inclining to believe you till I accidentally touched upon your tender part. But now you have restored me to my former opinion and compassion.

Enter JEREMY.

Fer. Sir, your father has sent to know if you are any better yet? Will you please to be mad, sir, or how?

Val. Stupidity! You know the penalty of all I'm worth must pay for the confession of my senses. I'm mad, and will be mad to everybody but this lady.

* Bedlam, the lunatic asylum.

Fer. So. Just the very backside of truth. But lying is a figure in speech that interlards the greatest part of my conversation. Madam, your ladyship's woman.

[*Goes to the door.*]

Enter JENNY.

Ang. Well, have you been there? Come hither.

Jenny [*aside to ANGELICA*]. Yes, madam, Sir Sampson will wait upon you presently.

Val. You are not leaving me in this uncertainty?

Ang. Would anything but a madman complain of uncertainty? Uncertainty and expectation are the joys of life. Security is an insipid thing, and the overtaking and possessing of a wish discovers the folly of the chase. Never let us know one another better, for the pleasure of a masquerade is done when we come to show our faces; but I'll tell you two things before I leave you: I am not the fool you take me for, and you are mad, and don't know it.

[*Exeunt ANGELICA and JENNY.*]

Val. From a riddle you can expect nothing but a riddle. There's my instruction and the moral of my lesson.

Fer. What, is the lady gone again, sir? I hope you understood one another before she went?

Val. Understood? She is harder to be understood than a piece of Egyptian antiquity, or an Irish manuscript; you may pore till you spoil your eyes, and not improve your knowledge.

Fer. I have heard 'em say, sir, they read hard Hebrew books backwards. Maybe you begin to read at the wrong end.

Val. They say so of a witch's prayer, and dreams and Dutch almanacks* are to be understood by contraries. But there's regularity and method in that. She is a medal without a reverse or inscription, for indifference has both sides

* A proverbial expression for an unintelligible farrago.

alike. Yet while she does not seem to hate me, I will pursue her, and know her if it be possible, in spite of the opinion of my satirical friend, Scandal, who says,

That women are like tricks by sleight of hand,
Which, to admire, we should not understand.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT V

Scene I—*A Room in FORESIGHT'S House.*

Enter ANGELICA and JENNY.

Ang. Where is Sir Sampson? Did you not tell me he would be here before me?

Jenny. He's at the great glass in the dining-room, madam, setting his cravat and wig.

Ang. How? I'm glad on't. If he has a mind I should like him, it's a sign he likes me; and that's more than half my design.

Jenny. I hear him, madam.

Ang. Leave me, and, d'ye hear, if Valentine should come or send, I am not to be spoken with. [*Exit JENNY.*]

Enter SIR SAMPSON.

Sir Samp. I have not been honoured with the commands of a fair lady a great while. Odd, madam, you have revived me. Not since I was five-and-thirty.

Ang. Why, you have no great reason to complain, Sir Sampson. That is not long ago.

Sir Samp. Zooks, but it is, madam. A very great while, to a man that admires a fine woman, as much as I do.

Ang. You're an absolute courtier, Sir Sampson.

Sir Samp. Not at all, madam. Ods-bud, you wrong me; I am not so old neither to be a bare courtier, only a man of words. Odd, I have warm blood about me yet, and can

serve a lady any way. Come, come, let me tell you, you women think a man old too soon, faith and troth you do. Come, don't despise fifty. Odd fifty, in a hale constitution, is no such contemptible age.

Ang. Fifty a contemptible age! Not at all, a very fashionable age, I think. I assure you I know very considerable beaux, that set a good face upon fifty. Fifty! I have seen fifty in a side box by candlelight out-blossom five-and-twenty.

Sir Samp. Outsides, outsides! A pize take 'em, mere outsides! Hang your side-box beaux! No, I'm none of those, none of your forced trees that pretend to blossom in the fall, and bud when they should bring forth fruit. I am of a long-lived race, and inherit vigour. None of my ancestors married till fifty, yet they begot sons and daughters till fourscore. I am of your patriarchs, I, a branch of one of your antideluvian families, fellows that the Flood could not wash away. Well, madam, what are your commands? Has any young rogue affronted you, and shall I cut his throat? Or——

Ang. No, Sir Sampson, I have no quarrel upon my hands. I have more occasion for your conduct than your courage at this time. To tell you the truth, I'm weary of living single, and want a husband.

Sir Samp. Odsbud, and 'tis pity you should. [*Aside.*] Odd, would she would like me, then I should hamper my young rogues! Odd, would she would! Faith and troth she's devilish handsome. [*Aloud.*] Madam, you deserve a good husband, and 'twere pity you should be thrown away upon any of these young idle rogues about the town. Odd, there's ne'er a young fellow worth hanging, that is, a very young fellow. Pize on 'em, they never think beforehand of anything; and if they commit matrimony, 'tis as they commit murder, out of a frolic, and are ready to hang them-

selves, or to be hanged by the law, the next morning. Odsso, have a care, madam.

Ang. Therefore I ask your advice, Sir Sampson. I have fortune enough to make any man easy that I can like. If there were such a thing as a young agreeable man, with a reasonable stock of good nature and sense. For I would neither have an absolute wit nor a fool.

Sir Samp. Odd, you are hard to please, madam. To find a young fellow that is neither a wit in his own eye, nor a fool in the eye of the world, is a very hard task. But, faith and troth, you speak very discreetly, for I hate both a wit and a fool.

Ang. She that marries a fool, Sir Sampson, forfeits the reputation of her honesty or understanding. And she that marries a very witty man is a slave to the severity and insolent conduct of her husband. I should like a man of wit for a lover, because I would have such an one in my power; but I would no more be his wife than his enemy. For his malice is not a more terrible consequence of his aversion than his jealousy is of his love.

Sir Samp. None of old Foresight's Sybils ever uttered such a truth. Odsbud, you have won my heart. I hate a wit. I had a son that was spoiled among 'em—a good hopeful lad, till he learned to be a wit, and might have risen in the State. But, a pox on't, his wit run him out of his money, and now his poverty has run him out of his wits.

Ang. Sir Sampson, as your friend, I must tell you you are very much abused in that matter. He's no more mad than you are.

Sir Samp. How, madam? Would I could prove it.

Ang. I can tell you how that may be done. But it is a thing that would make me appear to be too much concerned in your affairs.

Sir Samp. [*aside*]. Odsbud, I believe she likes me.

[*Aloud.*] Ah, madam, all my affairs are scarce worthy to be laid at your feet, and I wish, madam, they were in a better posture, that I might make a more becoming offer to a lady of your incomparable beauty and merit. If I had Peru in one hand, and Mexico in the other, and the Eastern Empire under my feet, it would make me only a more glorious victim to be offered at the shrine of your beauty.

Ang. Bless me, Sir Sampson, what's the matter?

Sir Samp. Odd, madam, I love you, and if you would take my advice in a husband——

Ang. Hold, hold, Sir Sampson. I asked your advice for a husband, and you are giving me your consent. I was indeed thinking to propose something like it in jest, to satisfy you about Valentine; for if a match were seemingly carried on, between you and me, it would oblige him to throw off his disguise of madness, in apprehension of losing me. For you know he has long pretended a passion for me.

Sir Samp. Gadzooks, a most ingenious contrivance, if we were to go through with it. But why must the match only be seemingly carried on? Odd, let it be a real contract.

Ang. Oh, fie, Sir Sampson, what would the world say?

Sir Samp. Say? They would say you were a wise woman and I a happy man. Odd, madam, I'll love you as long as I live, and leave you a good jointure when I die.

Ang. Aye, but that is not in your power, Sir Sampson. For when Valentine confesses himself in his senses, he must make over his inheritance to his younger brother.

Sir Samp. Odd, you're cunning, a wary baggage. Faith and troth, I like you the better. But, I warrant you, I have a proviso in the obligation in favour of myself. Body o' me, I have a trick to turn the settlement upon the issue male of our two bodies begotten. Odsbud, let us find children, and I'll find an estate!

Ang. Will you? Well, do you find the estate, and leave the tother to me.

Sir Samp. Oh, rogue! But I'll trust you. And will you consent? Is it a match then?

Ang. Let me consult my lawyer concerning this obligation, and if I find what you propose practicable, I'll give you my answer.

Sir Samp. With all my heart. Come in with me, and I'll lend you the bond. You shall consult your lawyer, and I'll consult a parson. Odzooks, I'm a young man. Odzooks, I'm a young man, and I'll make it appear. Odd, you're devilish handsome. Faith and troth, you're very handsome, and I'm very young, and very lusty. Odsbud, hussy, you know how to choose, and so do I. Odd, I think we are very well met. Give me your hand, odd, let me kiss it. 'Tis as warm and as soft—as what? Odd, as tother hand. Give me tother hand, and I'll mumble 'em, and kiss 'em till they melt in my mouth.

Ang. Hold, Sir Sampson. You're profuse of your vigour before your time. You'll spend your estate before you come to it.

Sir Samp. No, no, only give you a rent-roll of my possessions. Ah, baggage! I warrant you for little Sampson. Odd, Sampson's a very good name for an able fellow. Your Sampsons were strong dogs from the beginning.

Ang. Have a care, and don't over-act your part. If you remember, Sampson, the strongest of the name, pulled an old house over his head at last.

Sir Samp. Say you so, hussy? Come, let's go then. Odd, I long to be pulling too, come away. Odso, here's somebody coming. [Exeunt.]

Enter TATTLE and JEREMY.

Tat. Is not that she, gone out just now?

Fer. Aye, sir, she's just going to the place of appointment. Ah, sir, if you are not very faithful and close in this business, you'll certainly be the death of a person that has a most extraordinary passion for your honour's service.

Tat. Aye, who's that?

Fer. Even my unworthy self, sir. Sir, I have had an appetite to be fed with your commands a great while. And now, sir, my former master having much troubled the fountain of his understanding, it is a very plausible occasion for me to quench my thirst at the spring of your bounty. I thought I could not recommend myself better to you, sir, than by the delivery of a great beauty and fortune into your arms, whom I have heard you sigh for.

Tat. I'll make thy fortune. Say no more. Thou art a pretty fellow, and canst carry a message to a lady in a pretty soft kind of phrase, and with a good persuading accent.

Fer. Sir, I have the seeds of rhetoric and oratory in my head. I have been at Cambridge.

Tat. Aye, 'tis well enough for a servant to be bred at an University. But the education is a little too pedantic for a gentleman. I hope you are secret in your nature, private, close, ha?

Fer. Oh, sir, for that, sir, 'tis my chief talent. I'm as secret as the head of Nilus.

Tat. Aye? Who's he, though? A Privy Councillor?

Fer. [*aside*]. Oh, ignorance! [*Aloud.*] A cunning Egyptian, sir, that with his arms would overrun the country, yet nobody could ever find out his headquarters.

Tat. Close dog! A good whoremaster, I warrant him. The time draws nigh, Jeremy. Angelica will be veiled like a nun, and I must be hooded like a friar, ha, Jeremy?

Fer. Aye, sir, hooded like a hawk, to seize at first sight upon the quarry. It is the whim of my master's madness to be so dressed; and she is so in love with him, she'll comply

with anything to please him. Poor lady, I'm sure she'll have reason to pray for me, when she finds what a happy exchange she has made, between a madman and so accomplished a gentleman.

Tat. Aye, faith, so she will, Jeremy. You're a good friend to her, poor creature. I swear I do it hardly so much in consideration of myself as compassion to her.

Fer. 'Tis an act of charity, sir, to save a fine woman, with thirty thousand pound, from throwing herself away.

Tat. So 'tis, faith. I might have saved several others in my time, but egad, I could never find in my heart to marry anybody before.

Fer. Well, sir, I'll go and tell her my master's coming, and meet you in half a quarter of an hour, with your disguise, at your own lodgings. You must talk a little madly; she won't distinguish the tone of your voice.

Tat. No, no, let me alone for a counterfeit. I'll be ready for you.

[*Exit* JEREMY.]

Enter MISS PRUE.

Miss. Oh, Mr. Tattle, are you here? I'm glad I have found you. I have been looking up and down for you like anything, till I'm as tired as anything in the world.

Tat. [*aside*]. Oh, pox, how shall I get rid of this foolish girl?

Miss. Oh, I have pure news, I can tell you pure news. I must not marry the seaman now, my father says so. Why won't you be my husband? You say you love me, and you won't be my husband. And I know you may be my husband now, if you please.

Tat. Oh, fie, miss. Who told you so, child?

Miss. Why, my father. I told him that you loved me.

Tat. Oh, fie, Miss, why did you do so? And who told you so, child?

Miss. Who? Why, you did, did not you?

Tat. Oh, pox, that was yesterday, *Miss*, that was a great while ago, child. I have been asleep since, slept a whole night, and did not so much as dream of the matter.

Miss. Pshaw! Oh, but I dreamt that it was so though.

Tat. Aye, but your father will tell you that dreams come by contraries, child. Oh, fie! What, we must not love one another now. Pshaw! that would be a foolish thing indeed. Fie, fie, you're a woman now, and must think of a new man every morning, and forget him every night. No, no, to marry is to be a child again, and play with the same rattle always. Oh, fie, marrying is a paw* thing.

Miss. Well, but don't you love me as well as you did last night then?

Tat. No, no, child, you would not have me.

Miss. No? Yes, but I would though.

Tat. Pshaw! but I tell you you would not. You forget you're a woman, and don't know your own mind.

Miss. But here's my father, and he knows my mind.

Enter FORESIGHT.

Fore. Oh, Mr. Tattle, your servant. You are a close man. But methinks your love to my daughter was a secret I might have been trusted with, or had you a mind to try if I could discover it by my art, hum, ha? I think there is something in your physiognomy that has a resemblance of her, and the girl is like me.

Tat. [*aside*]. And so you would infer that you and I are alike. What does the old prig† mean? I'll banter him, and laugh at him, and leave him. [*Aloud.*] I fancy you have a wrong notion of faces.

Fore. How? What, a wrong notion? How so?

* Stupid.

† Coxcomb.

Tat. In the way of art. I have some taking features, not obvious to vulgar eyes, that are indications of a sudden turn of good fortune in the lottery of wives, and promise a great beauty and great fortune reserved alone for me by a private intrigue of destiny, kept secret from the piercing eye of perspicuity, from all astrologers and the stars themselves.

Fore. How? I will make it appear that what you say is impossible.

Tat. Sir, I beg your pardon, I'm in haste.

Fore. For what?

Tat. To be married, sir, married.

Fore. Aye, but pray take me along with you, sir.

Tat. No, sir, 'tis to be done privately. I never make confidants.

Fore. Well, but my consent, I mean. You won't marry my daughter without my consent?

Tat. Who, I, sir? I'm an absolute stranger to you and your daughter, sir.

Fore. Hey-day! What time of the moon is this?

Tat. Very true, sir, and desire to continue so. I have no more love for your daughter than I have likeness of you; and I have a secret in my heart which you would be glad to know, and shan't know; and yet you shall know it too, and be sorry for 't afterwards. I'd have you to know, sir, that I am as knowing as the stars, and as secret as the night. And I'm going to be married just now, yet did not know of it half an hour ago, and the lady stays for me, and does not know of it yet. There's a mystery for you. I know you love to untie difficulties, or if you can't solve this, stay here a quarter of an hour, and I'll come and explain it to you.

[*Exit.*

Miss. Oh, father, why will you let him go? Won't you make him to be my husband?

Fore. Mercy on us, what do these lunacies portend? Alas! he's mad, child, stark wild.

Miss. What, and must not I have e'er a husband then? What, must I go to bed to Nurse again, and be a child as long as she's an old woman? Indeed but I won't, for now my mind is set upon a man, I will have a man some way or other. Oh! methinks I'm sick when I think of a man, and if I can't have one I would go to sleep all my life. For when I'm awake it makes me wish and long, and I don't know for what, and I'd rather be always asleep than sick with thinking.

Fore. Oh, fearful! I think the girl's influenced too. Hussy, you shall have a rod.

Miss. A fiddle for a rod, I'll have a husband, and if you won't get me one, I'll get one for myself. I'll marry our Robin the butler. He says he loves me, and he's a handsome man, and shall be my husband. I'll warrant he'll be my husband, and thank me too, for he told me so.

Enter SCANDAL, MRS. FORESIGHT and NURSE.

Fore. Did he so? I'll dispatch him for 't presently, rogue. Oh, Nurse, come hither.

Nurse. What is your worship's pleasure?

Fore. Here, take your young mistress and lock her up presently, till farther orders from me. Not a word, hussy. Do what I bid you. No reply. Away. And bid Robin make ready to give an account of his plate and linen. D'ye hear, begone when I bid you.

Mrs. Fore. What's the matter, husband?

Fore. 'Tis not convenient to tell you now. Mr. Scandal, Heaven keep us all in our senses. I fear there is a contagious frenzy abroad. How does Valentine?

Scan. Oh, I hope he will do well again. I have a message from him to your niece Angelica.

Fore. I think she has not returned, since she went abroad with Sir Sampson. Nurse, why are you not gone?
[*Exeunt NURSE and MISS PRUE.*]

Enter BEN.

Mrs. Fore. Here's Mr. Benjamin. He can tell us if his father be come home.

Ben. Who, father? Aye, he's come home with a vengeance.

Mrs. Fore. Why, what's the matter?

Ben. Matter! Why, he's mad.

Fore. Mercy on us, I was afraid of this.

Ben. And there's the handsome young woman, she, as they say, brother Val went mad for. She's mad too, I think.

Fore. Oh, my poor niece, my poor niece, is she gone too? Well, I shall run mad next.

Mrs. Fore. Well, but how mad? How d'y'e mean?

Ben. Nay, I'll give you leave to guess. I'll undertake to make a voyage to Antegoa. No, hold! I mayn't say so neither. But I'll sail as far as Leghorn and back again before you shall guess at the matter, and do nothing else. Mess, you may take in all the points of the compass and not hit right.

Mrs. Fore. Your experiment will take up a little too much time.

Ben. Why, then I'll tell you. There's a new wedding upon the stocks, and they two are a-going to be married to rights.

Scan. Who?

Ben. Why, father, and—the young woman. I can't hit of her name.

Scan. Angelica?

Ben. Aye, the same.

Mrs. Fore. Sir Sampson and Angelica? Impossible!

Ben. That may be, but I'm sure it is as I tell you.

Scan. 'Sdeath, it's a jest. I can't believe it.

Ben. Look you, friend, it's nothing to me whether you believe it or no. What I say is true. D'ye see, they are married, or just going to be married, I know not which.

Fore. Well, but they are not mad, that is, not lunatic?

Ben. I don't know what you may call madness. But she's mad for a husband, and he's horn mad, I think, or they'd ne'er make a match together. Here they come.

Enter SIR SAMPSON, ANGELICA *and* BUCKRAM.

Sir Samp. Where is this old soothsayer, this uncle of mine elect? Aha! old Foresight, Uncle Foresight, wish me joy, Uncle Foresight, double joy, both as uncle and astrologer. Here's a conjunction that was not foretold in all your Ephemeris. The brightest star in the blue firmament is "shot from above, in a jelly of love,"* and so forth, and I'm lord of the ascendant. Odd, you're an old fellow, Foresight, Uncle, I mean, a very old fellow, Uncle Foresight, and yet you shall live to dance at my wedding, faith and troth you shall. Odd, we'll have the music of the spheres for thee, old Lilly, that we will, and thou shalt lead up a dance in Via Lactea.

Fore. I'm thunderstruck! You are not married to my niece?

Sir Samp. Not absolutely married, Uncle, but very near it, within a kiss of the matter, as you see.

[*Kisses* ANGELICA.]

Ang. 'Tis very true indeed, Uncle. I hope you'll be my father, and give me.

Sir Samp. That he shall, or I'll burn his globes. Body o' me, he shall be thy father. I'll make him thy father, and thou shalt make me a father, and I'll make thee a mother,

* A quotation from the Spirit's song in Dryden's *Tyrannic Love* (1669).

and we'll beget sons and daughters enough to put the weekly bills out of countenance.

Scan. Death and Hell! Where's Valentine. [Exit.

Mrs. Fore. This is so surprising——

Sir Samp. How? What does my aunt say? Surprising, Aunt? Not at all, for a young couple to make a match in winter? Not at all. It's a plot to undermine cold weather, and destroy that usurper of a bed called a warming-pan.

Mrs. Fore. I'm glad to hear you have so much fire in you, Sir Sampson.

Ben. Mess, I fear his fire's little better than tinder. Mayhap it will only serve to light up a match for somebody else. The young woman's a handsome young woman, I can't deny it, but, father, if I might be your pilot in this case, you should not marry her. It's just the same thing as if so be you should sail so far as the Straits without provision.

Sir Samp. Who gave you authority to speak, sirrah? To your element, fish. Be mute, fish, and to sea. Rule your helm, sirrah, don't direct me.

Ben. Well, well, take you care of your own helm, or you mayn't keep your new vessel steady.

Sir Samp. Why, you impudent tarpaulin! Sirrah, do you bring your forecastle jests upon your father? But I shall be even with you. I won't give you a groat. Mr. Buckram, is the conveyance so worded that nothing can possibly descend to this scoundrel? I would not so much as have him have the prospect of an estate, though there were no way to come to it but by the north-east passage.

Buck. Sir, it is drawn according to your directions. There is not the least cranny of the law unstopped.

Ben. Lawyer, I believe there's many a cranny and leak unstopped in your conscience. If so be that one had a pump to your bosom, I believe we should discover a foul hold. They say a witch will sail in a sieve, but I believe the devil

would not venture aboard o' your conscience, and that's for you.

Sir Samp. Hold your tongue, sirrah. How now, who's here?

Enter TATTLE and MRS. FRAIL.

Mrs. Frail. Oh, sister, the most unlucky accident.

Mrs. Fore. What's the matter?

Tat. Oh, the two most unfortunate poor creatures in the world we are.

Fore. Bless us! How so?

Mrs. Frail. Ah, Mr. Tattle and I, poor Mr. Tattle and I are—— I can't speak it out.

Tat. Nor I. Poor Mrs. Frail and I are——

Mrs. Frail. Married.

Mrs. Fore. Married! How?

Tat. Suddenly, before we knew where we were. That villain, Jeremy, by the help of disguises, tricked us into one another.

Fore. Why, you told me just now you went hence in haste to be married.

Ang. But I believe Mr. Tattle meant the favour to me, I thank him.

Tat. I did, as I hope to be saved, madam. My intentions were good. But this is the most cruel thing, to marry one does not know how, nor why, nor wherefore. The devil take me if ever I was so much concerned at anything in my life.

Ang. 'Tis very unhappy, if you don't care for one another.

Tat. The least in the world. That is for my part, I speak for myself. Gad, I never had the least thought of serious kindness. I never liked anybody less in my life. Poor woman! Gad, I'm sorry for her too, for I have no reason

to hate her neither, but I believe I shall lead her a damned sort of a life.

Mrs. Fore. [to *Mrs. Frail*]. He's better than no husband at all, though he's a coxcomb.

Mrs. Frail [to *her*]. Aye, aye, it's well it's no worse. [Aloud.] Nay, for my part I always despised Mr. Tattle of all things; nothing but his being my husband could have made me like him less.

Tat. Look you there, I thought as much. Pox on't, I wish we could keep it secret. Why, I don't believe any of this company would speak of it.

Mrs. Frail. But, my dear, that's impossible. The parson and that rogue Jeremy will publish it.

Tat. Aye, my dear, so they will, as you say.

Ang. Oh, you'll agree very well in a little time. Custom will make it easy to you.

Tat. Easy? Pox on't, I don't believe I shall sleep to-night.

Sir Samp. Sleep, quotha? No, why you would not sleep on your wedding night? I'm an older fellow than you, and don't mean to sleep.

Ben. Why, there's another match now, as thof a couple of privateers were looking for a prize, and should fall foul of one another. I'm sorry for the young man with all my heart. Look you, friend, if I may advise you, when she's going—for that you must expect, I have experience of her—when she's going, let her go. For no matrimony is tough enough to hold her, and if she can't drag her anchor along with her, she'll break her cable, I can tell you that. Who's here, the madman?

Enter VALENTINE, dressed, SCANDAL and JEREMY.

Val. No, here's the fool, and if occasion be, I'll give it under my hand.

Sir Samp. How now?

Val. Sir, I'm come to acknowledge my errors, and ask your pardon.

Sir Samp. What, have you found your senses at last then? In good time, sir.

Val. You were abused, sir. I never was distracted.

Fore. How? Not mad, Mr. Scandal?

Scan. No, really, sir, I'm his witness. It was all counterfeit.

Val. I thought I had reasons. But it was a poor contrivance, the effect has shown it such.

Sir Samp. Contrivance! What, to cheat me, to cheat your father? Sirrah, could you hope to prosper?

Val. Indeed, I thought, sir, when the father endeavoured to undo the son, it was a reasonable return of nature.

Sir Samp. Very good, sir. Mr. Buckram, are you ready? [To VALENTINE.] Come, sir, will you sign and seal?

Val. If you please, sir. But first I would ask this lady one question.

Sir Samp. Sir, you must ask me leave first. That lady? No, sir, you shall ask that lady no questions till you have asked her blessing, sir. That lady is to be my wife.

Val. I have heard as much, sir, but I would have it from her own mouth.

Sir Samp. That's as much as to say I lie, sir, and you don't believe what I say.

Val. Pardon me, sir. But I reflect that I very lately counterfeited madness; I don't know but the frolic may go round.

Sir Samp. Come, chuck, satisfy him, answer him. Come, come, Mr. Buckram, the pen and ink.

Buck. Here it is, sir, with the deed. All is ready.

[VALENTINE goes to ANGELICA.]

Ang. 'Tis true you have a great while pretended love to me. Nay, what if you were sincere? Still you must pardon

me if I think my own inclinations have a better right to dispose of my person than yours.

Sir Samp. Are you answered now, sir?

Val. Yes, sir.

Sir Samp. Where's your plot, sir, and your contrivance now, sir? Will you sign, sir? Come, will you sign and seal?

Val. With all my heart, sir.

Scan. 'Sdeath, you are not mad indeed to ruin yourself?

Val. I have been disappointed of my only hope, and he that loses hope may part with anything. I never valued fortune, but as it was subservient to my pleasure, and my only pleasure was to please this lady. I have made many vain attempts, and find at last that nothing but my ruin can effect it, which, for that reason, I will sign to. Give me the paper.

Ang. [*aside*]. Generous Valentine!

Buck. Here is the deed, sir.

Val. But where is the bond, by which I am obliged to sign this?

Buck. Sir Sampson, you have it.

Ang. No, I have it, and I'll use it as I would everything that is an enemy to Valentine. [*Tears the paper.*]

Sir Samp. How now?

Val. Ha!

Ang. [*to VALENTINE*]. Had I the world to give you it could not make me worthy of so generous and faithful a passion. Here's my hand, my heart was always yours, and struggled very hard to make this utmost trial of your virtue.

Val. Between pleasure and amazement I am lost! But on my knees I take the blessing.

Sir Samp. Oons, what is the meaning of this?

Ben. Mess, here's the wind changed again. Father, you and I may make a voyage together now.

Ang. Well, Sir Sampson, since I have played you a trick, I'll advise you how you may avoid such another. Learn to be a good father, or you'll never get a second wife. I always loved your son, and hated your unforgiving nature. I was resolved to try him to the utmost. I have tried you too, and know you both. You have not more faults than he has virtues, and 'tis hardly more pleasure to me that I can make him and myself happy than that I can punish you.

Val. If my happiness could receive addition this kind surprise would make it double.

Sir Samp. Oons, you're a crocodile.

Fore. Really, Sir Sampson, this is a sudden eclipse.

Sir Samp. You're an illiterate old fool, and I'm another. [Exit.]

Tat. If the gentleman is in disorder for want of a wife, I can spare him mine. [To JEREMY.] Oh, are you there, sir? I'm indebted to you for my happiness.

Fer. Sir, I ask you ten thousand pardons. 'Twas an arrant mistake. You see, sir, my master was never mad, nor anything like it. Then how could it be otherwise?

Val. Tattle, I thank you. You would have interposed between me and Heaven, but Providence laid Purgatory in your way. You have but justice.

Scan. I hear the fiddles that Sir Sampson provided for his own wedding. Methinks 'tis pity they should not be employed when the match is so much mended. Valentine, though it be morning, we may have a dance.

Val. Anything, my friend, everything that looks like joy and transport.

Scan. Call 'em, Jeremy.

Ang. I have done dissembling now, Valentine, and if that coldness which I have always worn before you should turn to an extreme fondness, you must not suspect it.

Val. I'll prevent that suspicion. For I intend to dote to

that immoderate degree, that your fondness shall never distinguish itself enough to be taken notice of. If ever you seem to love too much, it must be only when I can't love enough.

Ang. Have a care of promises. You know you are apt to run more in debt than you are able to pay.

Val. Therefore I yield my body as your prisoner, and make your best on't.

Scan. The music stays for you. [*Dance.*] Well, madam, you have done exemplary justice in punishing an inhuman father, and rewarding a faithful lover. But there is a third good work which I, in particular, must thank you for. I was an infidel to your sex, and you have converted me. For now I am convinced that all women are not, like fortune, blind in bestowing favours either on those who do not merit, or who do not want 'em.

Ang. 'Tis an unreasonable accusation that you lay upon our sex. You tax us with injustice only to cover your own want of merit. You would all have the reward of love, but few have the constancy to stay till it becomes your due. Men are generally hypocrites and infidels. They pretend to worship, but have neither zeal nor faith. How few, like Valentine, would persevere even to martyrdom, and sacrifice their interest to their constancy! In admiring me, you misplace the novelty.

The miracle to-day is that we find
A lover true, not that a woman's kind.

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

EPILOGUE

Spoken at the opening of the New House
by Mrs. Bracegirdle

*Sure Providence at first designed this place
To be the player's refuge in distress:**
*For still in every storm they all run hither,
As to a shed that shields 'em from the weather.
But thinking of this change which last befell us,
It's like what I have heard our poets tell us;
For when behind our scenes their suits are pleading,
To help their love, sometimes they show their reading;
And wanting ready cash to pay for hearts,
They top their learning on us, and their parts.
Once of philosophers they told us stories,
Whom, as I think, they called—Py—Pythagories,
I'm sure 'tis some such Latin name they give 'em.
And we, who know no better, must believe 'em.
Now to these men, say they, such souls were given,
That after death ne'er went to Hell nor Heaven,
But lived, I know not how, in beasts, and then
When many years were past in men again.
Methinks we players resemble such a soul;
That does from bodies, we from houses stroll.
Thus Aristotle's soul, of old that was,
May now be damned to animate an ass,
Or in this very house, for aught we know,
Is doing painful penance in some beau.*

* Lisle's tennis court in Lincoln's Inn Fields was converted into a theatre by Davenant whose company occupied it from 1661 to 1671. In 1672 it was used by the Drury Lane company in consequence of the burning of their theatre. It was later reconverted into a tennis court, only again to become a theatre on the secession of Betterton and the other actors in 1695.

*And thus our audience, which did once resort
To shining theatres to see our sport,
Now find us tossed into a tennis-court.
These walls but tother day were filled with noise
Of roaring gamesters, and your damme boys;
Then bounding balls and racquets they encompassed,
And now they're filled with jests, and flights, and bom-
bast.*

*I vow I don't much like this transmigration,
Strolling from place to place by circulation;
Grant Heaven, we don't return to our first station.
I know not what these think, but for my part
I can't reflect without an aching heart
How we should end in our original, a cart.*
But we can't fear, since you're so good to save us,
That you have only set us up to leave us.
Thus from the past we hope for future grace,
I beg it——
And some here know I have a begging face.
Then pray continue this your kind behaviour,
For a clear stage won't do without your favour.*

* The cart of Thespis.

THE
WAY OF THE WORLD

P R O L O G U E

Spoken by Mr. Betterton

*Of those few fools, who with ill stars are cursed,
 Sure scribbling fools, called poets, fare the worst;
 For they're a sort of fools which Fortune makes,
 And, after she has made 'em fools, forsakes.
 With Nature's oafs 'tis quite a different case,
 For fortune favours all her idiot race;
 In her own nest the cuckoo eggs we find,
 O'er which she broods to hatch the changeling kind.
 No portion for her own she has to spare,
 So much she dotes on her adopted care.*

*Poets are bubbles by the town drawn in,
 Suffered at first some trifling stakes to win,
 But what unequal hazards do they run!
 Each time they write they venture all they've won;
 The squire that's buttered still is sure to be undone.
 This author heretofore has found your favour,
 But pleads no merit from his past behaviour.
 To build on that might prove a vain presumption,
 Should grants to poets made admit resumption;
 And in Parnassus he must lose his seat,
 If that be found a forfeited estate.*

*He owns with toil he wrought the following scenes,
 But if they're naught ne'er spare him for his pains.
 Damn him the more: have no commiseration
 For dullness on mature deliberation.
 He swears he'll not resent one hissed-off scene
 Nor, like those peevish wits, his play maintain,
 Who, to assert their sense, your taste arraign.*

*Some plot we think he has, and some new thought,
Some humour too, no farce—but that's a fault.
Satire, he thinks, you ought not to expect:
For so reformed a town, who dares correct?
To please this time has been his sole pretence,
He'll not instruct, lest it should give offence.
Should he by chance a knave or fool expose,
That hurts none here, sure here are none of those.
In short, our play shall (with your leave to show it)
Give you one instance of a passive poet,
Who to your judgments yields all resignation:
So save or damn, after your own discretion.*

—

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

FAINALL, in love with Mrs. MARWOOD.

MIRABELL, in love with Mrs. MILLAMANT.

WITWOUND and PETULANT, followers of Mrs. MILLAMANT.

SIR WILFULL WITWOUND, half-brother to WITWOUND, and nephew to LADY WISHFORT.

WAITWELL, servant to MIRABELL.

LADY WISHFORT, enemy to MIRABELL for having falsely pretended love to her.

Mrs. MILLAMANT, a fine lady, niece to LADY WISHFORT, and loves MIRABELL.

Mrs. MARWOOD, friend to Mr. FAINALL, and likes MIRABELL.

Mrs. FAINALL, daughter to LADY WISHFORT, and wife to FAINALL, formerly friend to MIRABELL.

FOIBLE, woman to LADY WISHFORT.

MINCING, woman to Mrs. MILLAMANT.

Messenger, Coachman, Dancers, Footmen, and Attendants.

SCENE—London.

TIME—equal to that of the presentation.

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THE WAY OF THE WORLD

ACT I

Scene I—*A Chocolate House, MIRABELL and FAINALL rising from cards, BETTY waiting.*

Mira. You are a fortunate man, Mr. Fainall.

Fain. Have we done?

Mira. What you please. I'll play on to entertain you.

Fain. No, I'll give you your revenge another time, when you are not so indifferent. You are thinking of something else now, and play too negligently. The coldness of a losing gamester lessens the pleasure of the winner. I'd no more play with a man that slighted his ill-fortune than I'd make love to a woman who undervalued the loss of her reputation.

Mira. You have a taste extremely delicate, and are for refining on your pleasures.

Fain. Prithee, why so reserved? Something has put you out of humour.

Mira. Not at all: I happen to be grave to-day, and you are gay. That's all.

Fain. Confess. Millamant and you quarrelled last night, after I left you? My fair cousin has some humours that would tempt the patience of a stoick. What, some coxcomb came in, and was well received by her while you were by?

Mira. Witwoud and Petulant, and what was worse, her aunt, your wife's mother, my evil genius, or to sum up all in her own name, my old Lady Wishfort—came in.

Fain. Oh, there it is then. She has a lasting passion for you, and with reason. What, then my wife was there?

Mira. Yes, and Mrs. Marwood and three or four more, whom I never saw before. Seeing me they all put on their grave faces, whispered one another, then complained aloud of the vapours, and after fell into a profound silence.

Fain. They had a mind to be rid of you.

Mira. For which reason I resolved not to stir. At last the good old lady broke through her painful taciturnity with an invective against long visits. I would not have understood her, but Millamant joining in the argument I rose and with a constrained smile told her I thought nothing was so easy as to know when a visit began to be troublesome. She reddened and I withdrew without expecting her reply.

Fain. You were to blame to resent what she spoke only in compliance with her aunt.

Mira. She is more mistress of herself than to be under the necessity of such a resignation.

Fain. What, though half her fortune depends upon her marrying with my lady's approbation?

Mira. I was then in such a humour that I should have been better pleased if she had been less discreet.

Fain. Now I remember, I wonder not they were weary of you. Last night was one of their cabal nights. They have 'em three times a week, and meet by turns at one another's apartments, where they come together, like the Coroner's inquest, to sit upon the murdered reputations of the week. You and I are excluded, and it was once proposed that all the male sex should be excepted; but somebody moved that to avoid scandal there might be one man of the community, upon which motion Witwoud and Petulant were enrolled members.

Mira. And who may have been the foundress of this sect? My Lady Wishfort, I warrant, who publishes her detestation of mankind, and full of the vigour of fifty-five

declares for a friend and ratafia.* And let posterity shift for itself, she'll breed no more!

Fain. The discovery of your sham addresses to her, to conceal your love to her niece, has provoked this separation. Had you dissembled better, things might have continued in the state of nature.

Mira. I did as much as man could with any reasonable conscience. I proceeded to the very last act of flattery with her, and was guilty of a song in her commendation. Nay, I got a friend to put her into a lampoon and compliment her with the imputation of an affair with a young fellow, which I carried so far that I told her the malicious town took notice that she was grown fat of a sudden, and when she lay in of a dropsy, persuaded her she was reported to be in labour. The devil's in't, if an old woman is to be flattered further, unless a man should endeavour downright personally to debauch her, and that my virtue forbade me. But for the discovery of this amour I am indebted to your friend, or your wife's friend, Mrs. Marwood.

Fain. What should provoke her to be your enemy, unless she has made you advances, which you have slighted? Women do not easily forgive omissions of that nature.

Mira. She was always civil to me, till of late. I confess I am not one of those coxcombs who are apt to interpret a woman's good manners to her prejudice, and think that she who does not refuse 'em everything, can refuse 'em nothing.

Fain. You are a gallant man, Mirabell, and though you may have cruelty enough not to satisfy a lady's longing, you have too much generosity not to be tender of her honour. Yet you speak with an indifference which seems to be affected, and confesses you are conscious of a negligence.

* "A sort of cherry brandy made with peach and apricot stones" (Summers).

Mira. You pursue the argument with a distrust that seems to be unaffected, and confesses you are conscious of a concern for which the lady is more indebted to you than is your wife.

Fain. Fie, fie, friend, if you grow censorious I must leave you. I'll look upon the gamesters in the next room.

Mira. Who are they?

Fain. Petulant and Witwoud. [*To BETTY.*] Bring me some chocolate. [*Exit.*]

Mira. Betty, what says your clock?

Betty. Turned of the last canonical hour, sir [*Exit.*]

Mira. How pertinently the jade answers me! [*Looking on his watch.*] Ha! Almost one o'clock! Oh, you're come.

Enter FOOTMAN.

Mira. Well, is the grand affair over? You have been something tedious.

Serv. Sir, there's such coupling at Pancras that they stand behind one another as 'twere in a country dance. Ours was the last couple to lead up, and no hopes appearing of dispatch—besides, the parson growing hoarse, we were afraid his lungs would have failed before it came to our turn—so we drove round to Duke's Place,* and there they were rivetted in a trice.

Mira. So, so. You are sure they are married?

Serv. Married and bedded, sir: I am witness.

Mira. Have you the certificate?

Serv. Here it is, sir.

Mira. Has the tailor brought Waitwell's clothes home, and the new liveries?

Serv. Yes, sir.

Mira. That's well. Do you go home again, d'ye hear,

* St. James's, Aldgate, like St. Pancras, was notorious for its irregular marriages.

and adjourn the consummation till farther order. Bid Waitwell shake his ears, and Dame Partlet rustle up her feathers, and meet me at one o'clock by Rosamund's Pond,* that I may see her before she returns to her lady. And as you tender your ears be secret. *[Exit FOOTMAN.]*

Re-enter FAINALL and BETTY.

Fain. Joy of your success, Mirabell! You look pleased.

Mira. Aye, I have been engaged in a matter of some sort of mirth, which is not yet ripe for discovery. I am glad this is not a Cabal night. I wonder, Fainall, that you who are married and of consequence should be discreet, will suffer your wife to be of such a party.

Fain. Faith, I am not jealous. Besides, most who are engaged are women and relations, and for the men, they are of a kind too contemptible to give scandal.

Mira. I am of another opinion. The greater the coxcomb, always the more the scandal; for a woman who is not a fool, can have but one reason for associating with a man who is one.

Fain. Are you jealous as often as you see Witwoud entertained by Millamant?

Mira. Of her understanding I am, if not of her person.

Fain. You do her wrong, for to give her her due she has wit.

Mira. She has beauty enough to make any man think so, and complaisance enough not to contradict him who shall tell her so.

Fain. For a passionate lover methinks you are a man somewhat too discerning in the failings of your mistress.

Mira. And for a discerning man, somewhat too passionate a lover; for I like her with all her faults, nay, like her for her faults. Her follies are so natural, or so artful, that

* In the south-west corner of St. James's Park.

they become her, and those affectations which in another woman would be odious serve but to make her more agreeable. I'll tell thee, Fainall, she once used me with that insolence, that in revenge I took her to pieces, sifted her, and separated her failings. I studied 'em, and got 'em by rote. The catalogue was so large that I was not without hopes one day or other to hate her heartily, to which end I so used myself to think of 'em that at length, contrary to my design and expectation, they gave me every hour less and less disturbance, till in a few days it became habitual to me to remember 'em without being displeased. They are now grown as familiar to me as my own frailties, and in all probability in a little time longer I shall like 'em as well.

Fain. Marry her, marry her. Be half as well acquainted with her charms as you are with her defects, and, my life on't, you are your own man again.

Mira. Say you so?

Fain. Aye, aye, I have experience. I have a wife, and so forth.

Enter MESSENGER.

Mess. Is one Squire Witwoud here?

Betty. Yes: what's your business?

Mess. I have a letter for him from his brother, Sir Wilfull, which I am charged to deliver into his own hands.

Betty. He's in the next room, friend. That way.

[Exit MESSENGER.]

Mira. What, is the chief of that noble family in town, Sir Wilfull Witwoud?

Fain. He is expected to-day. Do you know him?

Mira. I have seen him. He promises to be an extraordinary person. I think you have the honour to be related to him.

Fain. Yes: he is half-brother to this Witwoud by a former wife, who was sister to my Lady Wishfort, my

wife's mother. If you marry Millamant you must call cousins too.

Mira. I had rather be his relation than his acquaintance.

Fain. He comes to town in order to equip himself for travel.

Mira. For travel? Why the man that I mean is above forty.

Fain. No matter for that. 'Tis for the honour of England that all Europe should know we have blockheads of all ages.

Mira. I wonder there is not an act of Parliament to save the credit of the nation, and prohibit the exportation of fools.

Fain. By no means, 'tis better as 'tis. 'Tis better to trade with a little loss than to be quite eaten up with being overstocked.

Mira. Pray, are the follies of this knight-errant and those of the squire, his brother, anything related?

Fain. Not at all: Witwoud grows by the knight like a medlar grafted on a crab. One will melt in your mouth, and tother set your teeth on edge. One is all pulp and the other all core.

Mira. So one will be rotten before he be ripe, and the other will be rotten without ever being ripe at all.

Fain. Sir Wilfull is an odd mixture of bashfulness and obstinacy. But when he's drunk he's as loving as the monster in "The Tempest,"* and much after the same manner. To give tother his due, he has something of good nature, and does not always want wit.

Mira. Not always, but as often as his memory fails him, and his commonplace of comparisons. He is a fool with a good memory, and some few scraps of other folks' wit. He is one whose conversation can never be approved, yet it

* Sycorax in the Dryden-Davenant version of the play.

is now and then to be endured. He has indeed one good quality, he is not exceptious; for he so passionately affects the reputation of understanding raillery, that he will construe an affront into a jest, and call downright rudeness and ill language satire and fire.

Fain. If you have a mind to finish his picture, you have an opportunity to do it at full length. Behold the original!

Enter WITWOUND.

Wit. Afford me your compassion, my dears. Pity me, Fainall, Mirabell, pity me.

Mira. I do from my soul.

Fain. Why, what's the matter?

Wit. No letters for me, Betty?

Betty. Did not a messenger bring you one but now, sir?

Wit. Aye, but no other?

Betty. No, sir.

Wit. That's hard, that's very hard. A messenger? A mule, a beast of burden! He has brought me a letter from the fool my brother, as heavy as a panegyric in a funeral sermon, or a copy of commendatory verses from one poet to another. And what's worse, 'tis as sure a forerunner of the author as an epistle dedicatory.

Mira. A fool, and your brother, Witwound?

Wit. Aye, aye, my half-brother. My half-brother he is, no nearer, upon honour.

Mira. Then 'tis possible he may be but half a fool.

Wit. Good, good, Mirabell *le drôle!* Good, good! Hang him, don't let's talk of him. Fainall, how does your lady? Gad, I say anything in the world to get this fellow out of my head. I beg pardon that I should ask a man of pleasure and the town a question at once so foreign and domestic. But I talk like an old maid at a marriage, I don't know what I say. But she's the best woman in the world.

Fain. 'Tis well you don't know what you say, or else your commendation would go near to make me either vain or jealous.

Wit. No man in town lives well with a wife but Fainall. Your judgment, Mirabell?

Mira. You had better step and ask his wife, if you would be credibly informed.

Wit. Mirabell?

Mira. Aye.

Wit. My dear, I ask ten thousand pardons. Gad, I have forgot what I was going to say to you.

Mira. I thank you heartily, heartily.

Wit. No, but prithee excuse me. My memory is such a memory.

Mira. Have a care of such apologies, Witwoud, for I never knew a fool but he affected to complain either of the spleen or his memory.

Fain. What have you done with Petulant?

Wit. He's reckoning his money. My money it was. I have no luck to-day.

Fain. You may allow him to win of you at play, for you are sure to be too hard for him at repartee. Since you monopolise the wit that is between you, the fortune must be his of course.

Mira. I don't find that Petulant confesses the superiority of wit to be your talent, Witwoud.

Wit. Come, come, you are malicious now, and would breed debates. Petulant's my friend, and a very honest fellow, and a very pretty fellow, and has a smattering, faith and troth, a pretty deal of an odd sort of a small wit. Nay, I'll do him justice. I'm his friend, I won't wrong him. And if he had any judgment in the world, he would not be altogether contemptible. Come, come, don't detract from the merits of my friend.

Fain. You don't take your friend to be over-nicely bred?

Wit. No, no, hang him, the rogue has no manners at all, that I must own; no more breeding than a bum-bailey,* that I grant you. 'Tis pity, the fellow has fire and life.

Mira. What, courage?

Wit. Hum, faith, I don't know as to that; I can't say as to that. Yes, faith, in a controversy he'll contradict anybody.

Mira. Though 'twere a man whom he feared, or a woman whom he loved?

Wit. Well, well, he does not always think before he speaks. We have all our failings; you are too hard upon him, you are, faith. Let me excuse him. I can defend most of his faults, except one or two. One he has, that's the truth on't, if he were my brother I could not acquit him. That indeed I could wish were otherwise.

Mira. Aye, marry, what's that, Witwoud?

Wit. Oh, pardon me. Expose the infirmities of my friend! No, my dear, excuse me there.

Fain. What, I warrant, he's unsincere, or 'tis some such trifle.

Wit. No, no: what if he be? 'Tis no matter for that, his wit will excuse that. A wit should no more be sincere than a woman constant; one argues a decay of parts, as tother of beauty.

Mira. May be you think him too positive?

Wit. No, no, his being positive is an incentive to argument, and keeps up conversation.

Fain. Too illiterate?

Wit. That! That's his happiness. His want of learning gives him the more opportunities to show his natural parts.

Mira. He wants words?

Wit. Aye, but I like him for that now, for his want of

* Bailliff's man.

words gives me the pleasure very often to explain his meaning.

Fain. He's impudent?

Wit. No, that's not it.

Mira. Vain?

Wit. No.

Mira. What, he speaks unseasonable truths sometimes, because he has not wit enough to invent an evasion?

Wit. Truths! Ha, ha, ha! No, no, since you will have it, I mean he never speaks truth at all, that's all. He will lie like a chambermaid, or a woman of quality's porter. Now that is a fault.

Enter COACHMAN.

Coach. Is Master Petulant here, mistress?

Betty. Yes.

Coach. Three gentlewomen in a coach would speak with him.

Fain. Oh, brave Petulant! Three!

Betty. I'll tell him.

Coach. You must bring two dishes of chocolate and a glass of cinnamon water.*

[Exeunt BETTY and COACHMAN.]

Wit. That should be for two fasting strumpets, and a bawd troubled with wind. Now you may know what the three are.

Mira. You are free with your friend's acquaintance.

Wit. Aye, aye: friendship without freedom is as dull as love without enjoyment, or wine without toasting; but to tell you a secret, these are trulls whom he allows coach hire and something more by the week to call on him once a day at public places.

Mira. How?

* A digestive cordial.

Wit. You shall see he won't go to 'em because there's no more company here to take notice of him. Why, this is nothing to what he used to do. Before he found out this way, I have known him call for himself.

Fain. Call for himself? What dost thou mean?

Wit. Mean? Why he would slip you out of this chocolate house, just when you had been talking to him. As soon as your back was turned—whip, he was gone. Then trip to his lodging, clap on a hood and scarf and a mask, slap into a hackney coach, and drive hither to the door again in a trice, where he would send in for himself, that I mean, call for himself, wait for himself, nay, and what's more, not finding himself, sometimes leave a letter for himself.

Mira. I confess this is something extraordinary. I believe he waits for himself now, he is so long a-coming. Oh, I ask his pardon.

Enter PETULANT and BETTY.

Betty. Sir, the coach stays.

Pet. Well, well, I come. 'Sbud, a man had as good be a professed midwife as a professed whoremaster at this rate. To be knocked up and raised at all hours, and in all places! Pox on 'em, I won't come. Do you hear, tell 'em I won't come. Let 'em snivel and cry their hearts out.

Fain. You are very cruel, Petulant.

Pet. All's one, let it pass. I have a humour to be cruel.

Mira. I hope they are not persons of condition that you use at this rate?

Pet. Condition! Condition's a dried fig, if I am not in humour. By this hand, if they were your—a—a—your what-d'ye-call-'ems themselves, they must wait or rub off, if I want appetite.

Mira. What-d'ye-call-'ems! What are they, Wit-woud?

Wit. Empresses, my dear. By your what-d'ye-call-'ems he means Sultana queens.

Pet. Aye, Roxolana's.*

Mira. Cry you mercy!

Fain. Witwoud says they are——

Pet. What does he say they are?

Wit. I? Fine ladies, I say.

Pet. Pass on, Witwoud. Harkee, by this light his relations. Two co-heiresses, his cousins, and an old aunt, who loves catterwauling better than a conventicle.

Wit. Ha, ha, ha! I had a mind to see how the rogue would come off. Ha, ha, ha! Gad, I can't be angry with him, if he had said they were my mother and my sisters.

Mira. No?

Wit. No: the rogue's wit and readiness of invention charm me. Dear Petulant!

Betty. They are gone, sir, in great anger.

Pet. Enough; let 'em trundle. Anger helps complexion, saves paint.

Fain. This continence is all dissembled. This is in order to have something to brag of the next time he makes court to Millamant, and swear he has abandoned the whole sex for her sake.

Mira. Have you not left off your impudent pretensions there yet? I shall cut your throat some time or other, Petulant, about that business.

Pet. Aye, aye, let that pass. There are other throats to be cut.

Mira. Meaning mine, sir?

Pet. Not I. I mean nobody. I know nothing. But there are uncles and nephews in the world, and they may be rivals. What then? All's one for that.

* The Sultana in *The Siege of Rhodes* (by Davenant).

Mira. How? Harkee, Petulant, come hither. Explain, or I shall call your interpreter.

Pet. Explain? I know nothing. Why you have an uncle, have you not, lately come to town, and lodges by my Lady Wishfort's?

Mira. True.

Pet. Why, that's enough. You and he are not friends, and if he should marry and have a child, you may be disinherited, ha?

Mira. Where hast thou stumbled upon all this truth?

Pet. All's one for that. Why, then, say I know something.

Mira. Come, thou art an honest fellow, Petulant, and shalt make love to my mistress, thou shalt, faith. What has thou heard of my uncle?

Pet. I? Nothing I. If throats are to be cut, let swords clash. Snug's the word, I shrug and am silent.

Mira. Oh, raillery, raillery. Come, I know thou art in the women's secrets. What, you're a Cabalist? I know you stayed at Millamant's last night after I went. Was there any mention made of my uncle or me? Tell me. If thou hadst but good nature equal to thy wit, Petulant, Tony Witwoud, who is now thy competitor in fame, would show as dim by thee as a dead whiting's eye by a pearl of Orient. He would no more be seen by thee than Mercury is by the sun. Come, I'm sure thou wo't tell me.

Pet. If I do, will you grant me common sense then for the future?

Mira. Faith, I'll do what I can for thee, and I'll pray that Heaven may grant it thee in the meantime.

Pet. Well, harkee.

Fain. Petulant and you both will find Mirabell as warm a rival as a lover.

Wit. Pshaw, pshaw! That she laughs at Petulant is plain.

And for my part, but that it is almost a fashion to admire her, I should—— Harkee, to tell you a secret, but let it go no further, between friends, I shall never break my heart for her.

Fain. How?

Wit. She's handsome; but she's a sort of an uncertain woman.

Fain. I thought you had died for her?

Wit. Umph—no.

Fain. She has wit.

Wit. 'Tis what she will hardly allow anybody else. Now, demme, I should hate that, if she were as handsome as Cleopatra. Mirabell is not so sure of her as he thinks for.

Fain. Why do you think so?

Wit. We stayed pretty late there last night, and heard something of an uncle to Mirabell, who is lately come to town, and is between him and the best part of his estate. Mirabell and he are at some distance, as my Lady Wishfort has been told, and you know she hates Mirabell worse than a Quaker hates a parrot, or than a fishmonger hates a hard frost. Whether this uncle has seen Mrs. Millamant or not, I cannot say; but there were items of such a treaty being in embryo, and if it should come to life, poor Mirabell would be in some sort unfortunately fobbed, i'faith.

Fain. 'Tis impossible Millamant should harken to it.

Wit. Faith, my dear, I can't tell. She's a woman and a kind of a humorist.

Mira. And this is the sum of what you could collect last night.

Pet. The quintessence. Maybe Witwoud knows more; he stayed longer. Besides, they never mind him; they say anything before him.

Mira. I thought you had been the greatest favourite.

Pet. Aye, *tête-à-tête* but not in public, because I make remarks.

Mira. You do?

Pet. Aye, aye, pox, I'm malicious, man. Now he's soft, you know; they are not in awe of him. The fellow's well bred; he's what you call a—— what-d'ye-call-'em, a fine gentleman, but he's silly withal.

Mira. I thank you, I know as much as my curiosity requires. Fainall, are you for the Mall?

Fain. Aye, I'll take a turn before dinner.

Wit. Aye, we'll all walk in the park. The ladies talked of being there.

Mira. I thought you were obliged to watch for your brother, Sir Wilfull's, arrival?

Wit. No, no, he's come to his aunt's, my Lady Wishfort. Pox on him, I shall be troubled with him too. What shall I do with the fool?

Pet. Beg him for his estate, that I may beg you afterwards, and so have but one trouble with you both.

Wit. Oh, rare Petulant! Thou art as quick as fire in a frosty morning. Thou shalt to the Mall with us, and we'll be very severe.

Pet. Enough, I'm in a humour to be severe.

Mira. Are you? Pray then walk by yourselves. Let not us be accessory to your putting the ladies out of countenance with your senseless ribaldry, which you roar out aloud as often as they pass by you, and when you have made a handsome woman blush, then you think you have been severe.

Pet. What, what? Then let 'em either show their innocence by not understanding what they hear, or else show their discretion by not hearing what they would not be thought to understand.

Mira. But hast not thou then sense enough to know

that thou ought'st to be most ashamed thyself, when thou hast put another out of countenance?

Pet. Not I, by this hand. I always take blushing either for a sign of guilt, or ill-breeding.

Mira. I confess you ought to think so. You are in the right, that you may plead the error of your judgment in defence of your practice.

Where modesty's ill-manners, 'tis but fit
That impudence and malice pass for wit.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT II

Scene I—*St. James's Park.*

Enter MRS. FAINALL *and* MRS. MARWOOD.

Mrs. Fain. Aye, aye, dear Marwood, if we will be happy we must find the means in ourselves, and among ourselves. Men are ever in extremes: either doting or averse. While they are lovers, if they have fire and sense, their jealousies are insupportable, and when they cease to love—we ought to think at least—they loathe. They look upon us with horror and distaste; they meet us like the ghosts of what we were, and as from such, fly from us.

Mrs. Mar. True, 'tis an unhappy circumstance of life that love should ever die before us, and that the man so often should outlive the lover. But say what you will, 'tis better to be left than never to have been loved. To pass our youth in dull indifference, to refuse the sweets of life because they once must leave us, is as preposterous as to wish to have been born old, because we one day must be old. For my part, my youth may wear and waste, but it shall never rust in my possession.

Mrs. Fain. Then it seems you dissemble an aversion to mankind only in compliance to my mother's humour.

Mrs. Mar. Certainly. To be free, I have no taste of those insipid dry discourses with which our sex of force must entertain themselves, apart from men. We may affect endearments to each other, profess eternal friendships, and seem to dote like lovers; but 'tis not in our natures long to persevere. Love will resume his empire in our breasts, and every heart, or soon or late, receive and readmit him as its lawful tyrant.

Mrs. Fain. Bless me, how have I been deceived! Why, you profess a libertine.

Mrs. Mar. You see my friendship by my freedom. Come, be as sincere, acknowledge that your sentiments agree with mine.

Mrs. Fain. Never.

Mrs. Mar. You hate mankind?

Mrs. Fain. Heartily, inveterately.

Mrs. Mar. Your husband?

Mrs. Fain. Most transcendently. Aye, though I say it, meritoriously.

Mrs. Mar. Give me your hand upon it.

Mrs. Fain. There.

Mrs. Mar. I join with you. What I have said has been to try you.

Mrs. Fain. Is it possible? Dost thou hate those vipers, men?

Mrs. Mar. I have done hating 'em, and am now come to despise 'em. The next thing I have to do is eternally to forget 'em.

Mrs. Fain. There spoke the spirit of an Amazon, a Penthesilea.

Mrs. Mar. And yet I am thinking sometimes to carry my aversion further.

Mrs. Fain. How?

Mrs. Mar. Faith, by marrying. If I could but find one

that loved me very well, and would be thoroughly sensible of ill-usage, I think I should do myself the violence of undergoing the ceremony.

Mrs. Fain. You would not make him a cuckold?

Mrs. Mar. No: but I'd make him believe I did, and that's as bad.

Mrs. Fain. Why had not you as good do it?

Mrs. Mar. Oh, if he should ever discover it, he would then know the worst, and be out of his pain; but I would have him ever to continue upon the rack of fear and jealousy.

Mrs. Fain. Ingenious mischief! Would thou wert married to Mirabell!

Mrs. Mar. Would I were!

Mrs. Fain. You change colour?

Mrs. Mar. Because I hate him.

Mrs. Fain. So do I; but I can hear him named. But what reason have you to hate him particular?

Mrs. Mar. I never loved him; he is, and always was, insufferably proud.

Mrs. Fain. By the reason you give for your aversion, one would think it dissembled, for you have laid a fault to his charge of which his enemies must acquit him.

Mrs. Mar. Oh, then it seems you are one of his favourable enemies. Methinks you look a little pale, and now you flush again.

Mrs. Fain. Do I? I think I am a little sick o' the sudden.

Mrs. Mar. What ails you?

Mrs. Fain. My husband. Don't you see him? He turned short upon me unawares, and has almost overcome me.

Enter FAINALL and MIRABELL.

Mrs. Mar. Ha, ha, ha! He comes opportunely for you.

Mrs. Fain. For you, for he has brought Mirabell with him.

Fain. My dear.

Mrs. Fain. My soul.

Fain. You don't look well to-day, child.

Mrs. Fain. D'ye think so?

Mira. He is the only man that does, madam.

Mrs. Fain. The only man that would tell me so at least, and the only man from whom I could hear it without mortification.

Fain. Oh, my dear, I am satisfied of your tenderness. I know you cannot resent anything from me, especially what is an effect of my concern.

Mrs. Fain. Mr. Mirabell, my mother interrupted you in a pleasant relation last night; I would fain hear it out.

Mira. The persons concerned in that affair have yet a tolerable reputation. I am afraid Mr. Fainall will be censorious.

Mrs. Fain. He has a humour more prevailing than his curiosity, and will willingly dispense with the hearing of one scandalous story to avoid giving an occasion to make another by being seen to walk with his wife. This way, Mr. Mirabell, and I dare promise you will oblige us both.

[*Exeunt* MRS. FAINALL and MIRABELL.]

Fain. Excellent creature! Well, sure if I should live to be rid of my wife, I should be a miserable man.

Mrs. Mar. Aye?

Fain. For having only that one hope, the accomplishment of it of consequence must put an end to all my hopes. And what a wretch is he who must survive his hopes! Nothing remains when that day comes but to sit down and weep, like Alexander, when he wanted other worlds to conquer.

Mrs. Mar. Will you not follow 'em?

Fain. Faith, I think not.

Mrs. Mar. Pray, let us; I have a reason.

Fain. You are not jealous?

Mrs. Mar. Of whom?

Fain. Of Mirabell.

Mrs. Mar. If I am, is it inconsistent with my love to you that I am tender of your honour?

Fain. You would intimate then, as if there were a fellow-feeling between my wife and him.

Mrs. Mar. I think she does not hate him to that degree she would be thought.

Fain. But he, I fear, is too insensible.

Mrs. Mar. It may be you are deceived.

Fain. It may be so. I do now begin to apprehend it.

Mrs. Mar. What?

Fain. That I have been deceived, madam, and you are false.

Mrs. Mar. That I am false! What mean you?

Fain. To let you know I see through all your little arts. Come, you both love him, and both have equally dissembled your aversion. Your mutual jealousies of one another have made you clash till you have both struck fire. I have seen the warm confession reddening on your cheeks, and sparkling from your eyes.

Mrs. Mar. You do me wrong.

Fain. I do not. 'Twas for my ease to oversee and wilfully neglect the gross advances made him by my wife, that by permitting her to be engaged I might continue unsuspected in my pleasures, and take you oftener to my arms in full security. But could you think, because the nodding husband would not wake, that e'er the watchful lover slept?

Mrs. Mar. And wherewithal can you reproach me?

Fain. With infidelity, with loving another, with love of Mirabell.

Mrs. Mar. 'Tis false. I challenge you to show an instance that can confirm your groundless accusation. I hate him.

Fain. And wherefore do you hate him? He is insensible, and your resentment follows his neglect. An instance! The injuries you have done him are a proof: your interposing in his love. What cause had you to make discoveries of his pretended passion? To undeceive the credulous aunt, and be the officious obstacle of his match with Millamant?

Mrs. Mar. My obligations to my lady urged me. I had professed a friendship to her, and could not see her easy nature so abused by that dissembler.

Fain. What, was it conscience then? Professed a friendship? Oh, the pious friendships of the female sex!

Mrs. Mar. More tender, more sincere, and more enduring than all the vain and empty vows of men, whether professing love to us, or mutual faith to one another.

Fain. Ha, ha, ha! You are my wife's friend too.

Mrs. Mar. Shame and ingratitude! Do you reproach me? You, you upbraid me? Have I been false to her through strict fidelity to you, and sacrificed my friendship to keep my love inviolate? And have you the baseness to charge me with the guilt, unmindful of the merit? To you it should be meritorious that I have been vicious, and do you reflect that guilt upon me which should lie buried in your bosom?

Fain. You misinterpret my reproof. I meant but to remind you of the slight account you once could make of strictest ties, when set in competition with your love to me.

Mrs. Mar. 'Tis false, you urged it with deliberate malice. 'Twas spoke in scorn, and I never will forgive it.

Fain. Your guilt, not your resentment, begets your rage. If yet you loved you could forgive a jealousy; but you are stung to find you are discovered.

Mrs. Mar. It shall be all discovered. You too shall be discovered; be sure you shall. I can but be exposed. If I do it myself I shall prevent your baseness.

Fain. Why, what will you do?

Mrs. Mar. Disclose it to your wife, own what has passed between us.

Fain. Frenzy!

Mrs. Mar. By all my wrongs I'll do 't. I'll publish to the world the injuries you have done me both in my fame and fortune. With both I trusted you, you bankrupt in honour as indigent of wealth.

Fain. Your fame I have preserved. Your fortune has been bestowed at the prodigality of your love would have it in pleasures which we both have shared. Yet, had not you been false, I had ere this repaid it. 'Tis true. Had you permitted Mirabell with Millamant to have stolen their marriage, my lady had been incensed beyond all means of reconciliation, Millamant had forfeited the moiety of her fortune, which then would have descended to my wife. And wherefore did I marry but to make lawful prize of a rich widow's wealth, and squander it on love and you?

Mrs. Mar. Deceit and frivolous pretence!

Fain. Death, am I not married? What's pretence? Am I not imprisoned, fettered? Have I not a wife? Nay, a wife that was a widow, a young widow, a handsome widow, and would be again a widow, but that I have a heart of proof, and something of a constitution to bustle through the ways of wedlock and this world. Will you yet be reconciled to truth and me?

Mrs. Mar. Impossible. Truth and you are inconsistent. I hate you, and shall for ever.

Fain. For loving you?

Mrs. Mar. I loathe the name of love after such usage,

and next to the guilt with which you would asperse me, I scorn you most. Farewell.

Fain. Nay, we must not part thus.

Mrs. Mar. Let me go.

Fain. Come, I'm sorry.

Mrs. Mar. I care not. Let me go. Break my hands, do. I'd leave 'em to get loose.

Fain. I would not hurt you for the world. Have I no other hold to keep you here?

Mrs. Mar. Well, I have deserved it all.

Fain. You know I love you.

Mrs. Mar. Poor dissembling! Oh, that—— Well, it is not yet——

Fain. What? What is it not? What is it not yet? It is not yet too late?

Mrs. Mar. No, it is not yet too late. I have that comfort.

Fain. It is to love another.

Mrs. Mar. But not to loathe, detest, abhor mankind, myself and the whole treacherous world.

Fain. Nay, this is extravagance. Come, I ask your pardon. No tears. I was to blame; I could not love you and be easy in my doubts. Pray forbear. I believe you. I'm convinced I've done you wrong, and, anyway, every way will make amends. I'll hate my wife yet more. Damn her, I'll part with her, rob her of all she's worth, and we'll retire somewhere, anywhere, to another world. I'll marry thee. Be pacified. 'Sdeath, they come; hide your face, your tears. You have a mask, wear it a moment. This way, this way; be persuaded. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter MIRABELL and MRS. FAINALL.

Mrs. Fain. They are here yet.

Mira. They are turning into the other walk.

Mrs. Fain. While I only hated my husband, I could bear to see him; but since I have despised him, he's too offensive.

Mira. Oh, you should hate with prudence.

Mrs. Fain. Yes, for I have loved with indiscretion.

Mira. You should have just so much disgust for your husband as may be sufficient to make you relish your lover.

Mrs. Fain. You have been the cause that I have loved without bounds, and would you set limits to that aversion of which you have been the occasion? Why did you make me marry this man?

Mira. Why do we daily commit disagreeable and dangerous actions? To save that idol reputation. If the familiarities of our loves had produced that consequence of which you were apprehensive, where could you have fixed a father's name with credit, but on a husband? I knew Fainall to be a man lavish of his morals, an interested and professing friend, a false and a designing lover, yet one whose wit and outward fair behaviour have gained a reputation with the town enough to make that woman stand excused who has suffered herself to be won by his addresses. A better man ought not to have been sacrificed to the occasion; a worse had not answered to the purpose. When you are weary of him, you know your remedy.

Mrs. Fain. I ought to stand in some degree of credit with you, Mirabell.

Mira. In justice to you, I have made you privy to my whole design, and put it in your power to ruin or advance my fortune.

Mrs. Fain. Whom have you instructed to represent your pretended uncle?

Mira. Waitwell, my servant.

Mrs. Fain. He is an humble servant to Foible, my mother's woman, and may win her to your interest.

Mira. Care is taken for that. She is won and worn by this time. They were married this morning.

Mrs. Fain. Who?

Mira. Waitwell and Foible. I would not tempt my servant to betray me by trusting him too far. If your mother, in hopes to ruin me, should consent to marry my pretended uncle, he might, like Mosca in the Fox,* stand upon terms. So I made him sure beforehand.

Mrs. Fain. So, if my poor mother is caught in a contract, you will discover the imposture betimes, and release her by producing a certificate of her gallant's former marriage.

Mira. Yes, upon condition that she consent to my marriage with her niece, and surrender the moiety of her fortune in her possession.

Mrs. Fain. She talked last night of endeavouring at a match between Millamant and your uncle.

Mira. That was by Foible's direction, and my instruction, that she might seem to carry it more privately.

Mrs. Fain. Well, I have an opinion of your success; for I believe my lady will do anything to get an husband, and when she has this, which you have provided for her, I suppose she will submit to anything to get rid of him.

Mira. Yes, I think the good lady would marry anything that resembled a man, though 'twere no more than what a butler could pinch out of a napkin.

Mrs. Fain. Female frailty! We must all come to it, if we live to be old, and feel the craving of a false appetite when the true is decayed.

Mira. An old woman's appetite is depraved like that of a girl. 'Tis the green-sickness of a second childhood, and like the faint offer of a later spring serves but to usher in the fall, and withers in an affected bloom.

Mrs. Fain. Here's your mistress.

* The reference is to the *dénouement* in Ben Jonson's comedy, *Volpone*.

Enter MRS. MILLAMANT, WITWOUND *and* MINCING.

Mira. Here she comes, i'faith, full sail, with her fan spread and streamers out, and a shoal of fools for tenders. Ha, no, I cry her mercy.

Mrs. Fain. I see but one poor empty sculler, and he tows her woman after him.

Mira. [*to* MILLAMANT]. You seem to be unattended, madam. You used to have the *beaumonde* throng after you, and a flock of gay fine perukes hovering round you.

Wit. Like moths about a candle. I had like to have lost my comparison for want of breath.

Milla. Oh, I have denied myself airs to-day. I have walked as fast through the crowd——

Wit. As a favourite just disgraced, and with as few followers.

Milla. Dear Mr. Witwound, truce with your similitudes, for I am as sick of 'em——

Wit. As a physician of a good air. I cannot help it, madam, though 'tis against myself.

Milla. Yet again! Mincing, stand between me and his wit.

Wit. Do, Mrs. Mincing, like a screen before a great fire. I confess I do blaze to-day; I am too bright.

Mrs. Fain. But, dear Millamant, why were you so long?

Milla. Long! Lord, have I not made violent haste? I have asked every living thing I met for you; I have enquired after you as after a new fashion.

Wit. Madam, truce with your similitudes. No, you met her husband, and did not ask him for her.

Mira. By your leave, Witwound, that were like enquiring after an old fashion, to ask a husband for his wife.

Wit. Hum, a hit, a hit, a palpable hit, I confess it.

Mrs. Fain. You were dressed before I came abroad.

Milla. Aye, that's true. Oh, but then I had—
Mincing, what had I? Why was I so long?

Minc. Oh, mem, your la'ship stayed to peruse a pecket of letters.

Milla. Oh, aye, letters. I had letters. I am persecuted with letters. I hate letters. Nobody knows how to write letters; and yet one has 'em, one does not know why. They serve one to pin up one's hair.

Wit. Is that the way? Pray, madam, do you pin up your hair with all your letters? I find I must keep copies.

Milla. Only with those in verse, Mr. Witwoud. I never pin up my hair with prose. I think I tried once, Mincing?

Minc. Oh, mem, I shall never forget it.

Milla. Aye, poor Mincing tiffed* and tiffed all the morning.

Minc. Till I had the cremp in my fingers, I'll vow, mem, and all to no purpose. But when your ladyship pins it up with poetry it sits so pleasant the next day as anything, and is so pure and so crips.

Wit. Indeed, so crips?

Minc. You're such a critic, Mr. Witwoud.

Milla. Mirabell, did you take exceptions last night? Oh, aye, and went away. Now I think on't I'm angry. No, now I think on't I'm pleased, for I believe I gave you some pain.

Mira. Does that please you?

Milla. Infinitely; I love to give pain.

Mira. You would affect a cruelty which is not in your nature; your true vanity is in the power of pleasing.

Milla. Oh, I ask your pardon for that. One's cruelty is one's power, and when one parts with one's cruelty, one parts with one's power, and when one has parted with that, I fancy one's old and ugly.

* Arranged.

Mira. Aye, aye, suffer your cruelty to ruin the object of your power, to destroy your lover, and then how vain, how lost a thing you'll be! Nay, 'tis true. You are no longer handsome when you've lost your lover; your beauty dies upon the instant; for beauty is the lover's gift, 'tis he bestows your charms. Your glass is all a cheat. The ugly and the old, whom the looking-glass mortifies, yet after commendation can be flattered by it, and discover beauties in it; for that reflects our praises, rather than your face.

Milla. Oh, the vanity of these men! Mrs. Fainall, d'ye hear him? If they did not commend us, we were not handsome! Now you must know they could not commend one, if one was not handsome. Beauty the lover's gift! Lord, what is a lover, that it can give? Why, one makes lovers as fast as one pleases, and they live as long as one pleases, and they die as soon as one pleases. And then if one pleases one makes more.

Wit. Very pretty. Why, you make no more of making of lovers, madam, than of making so many card matches.

Milla. One no more owes one's beauty to a lover than one's wit to an echo. They can but reflect what we look and say—vain empty things if we are silent or unseen, and want a being.

Mira. Yet to those two vain empty things you owe two of the greatest pleasures of your life.

Milla. How so?

Mira. To your lover you owe the pleasure of hearing yourselves praised, and to an echo the pleasure of hearing yourselves talk.

Wit. But I know a lady that loves talking so incessantly, she won't give an echo fair play. She has that everlasting rotation of tongue that an echo must wait till she dies before it can catch her last words.

Milla. Oh, fiction! Mrs. Fainall, let us leave these men.

Mira. [*aside to MRS. FAINALL*]. Draw off Witwoud.

Mrs. Fain. Immediately. I have a word or two for Mr. Witwoud.

[*Exeunt MRS. FAINALL and WITWOUD.*]

Mira. I would beg a little private audience too. You had the tyranny to deny me last night, though you knew I came to impart a secret to you that concerned my love.

Milla. You saw I was engaged.

Mira. Unkind. You had the leisure to entertain a herd of fools, things who visit you from their excessive idleness, bestowing on your easiness that time which is the encumbrance of their lives. How can you find delight in such society? It is impossible they should admire you, they are not capable, or if they were, it should be to you as a mortification, for sure to please a fool is some degree of folly.

Milla. I please myself. Besides, sometimes to converse with fools is for my health.

Mira. Your health! Is there a worse disease than the conversation of fools?

Milla. Yes, the vapours. Fools are physic for it, next to asafoetida.*

Mira. You are not in a course of fools?

Milla. Mirabell, if you persist in this offensive freedom, you'll displease me. I think I must resolve after all not to have you. We shan't agree.

Mira. Not in our physic, it may be.

Milla. And yet our distemper in all likelihood will be the same, for we shall be sick of one another. I shan't endure to be reprimanded, nor instructed. 'Tis so dull to act always by advice, and so tedious to be told of one's faults. I can't bear it. Well, I won't have you, Mirabell. I'm resolved, I think. You may go. Ha, ha, ha! What would you give that you could help loving me?

* A popular anti-spasmodic.

Mira. I would give something that you did not know I could not help it.

Milla. Come, don't look grave then. Well, what do you say to me?

Mira. I say that a man may as soon make a friend by his wit, or a fortune by his honesty, as win a woman with plain-dealing and sincerity.

Milla. Sententious Mirabell! Prithee, don't look with that violent and inflexible wise face, like Solomon at the dividing of the child in an old tapestry hanging.

Mira. You are merry, madam, but I would persuade you for a moment to be serious.

Milla. What, with that face? No, if you keep your countenance 'tis impossible I should hold mine. Well, after all, there is something very moving in a lovesick face. Ha, ha, ha! Well, I won't laugh; don't be peevish. Heigho! Now I'll be melancholy, as melancholy as a watchlight. Well, Mirabell, if ever you will win me woo me now. Nay, if you are so tedious, fare you well. I see they are walking away.

Mira. Can you not find in the variety of your disposition one moment——

Milla. To hear you tell me Foible's married, and your plot like to speed? No.

Mira. But how you came to know it?

Milla. Without the help of the devil you can't imagine, unless she should tell me herself. Which of the two it may have been I will leave you to consider, and when you have done thinking of that, think of me.

[Exit with MINCING.]

Mira. I have something more. Gone. Think of you! To think of a whirlwind, though 'twere in a whirlwind, were a case of more steady contemplation, a very tranquillity of mind and mansion. A fellow that lives in a

windmill has not a more whimsical dwelling than the heart of a man that is lodged in a woman. There is no point of the compass to which they cannot turn, and by which they are not turned, and by one as well as another, for motion not method is their occupation. To know this, and yet continue to be in love, is to be made wise from the dictates of reason, and yet persevere to play the fool by the force of instinct. Oh, here come my pair of turtles. What, billing so sweetly! Is not Valentine's day over with you yet?

Enter WAITWELL and FOIBLE.

Mira. Sirrah, Waitwell, why sure you think you were married for your own recreation, and not for my convenience?

Wait. Your pardon, sir. With submission, we have indeed been solacing in lawful delights, but still with an eye to business, sir. I have instructed her as well as I could. If she can take your directions as readily as my instructions, sir, your affairs are in a prosperous way.

Mira. Give you joy, Mrs. Foible.

Foible. Alas! sir, I'm so ashamed. I'm afraid my lady has been in a thousand inquietudes for me. But I protest, sir, I made as much haste as I could.

Wait. That she did indeed, sir. It was my fault that she did not make more.

Mira. That I believe.

Foible. But I told my lady as you instructed me, sir, that I had a prospect of seeing Sir Rowland, your uncle, and that I would put her ladyship's picture in my pocket to show him, which I'll be sure to say has made him so enamoured of her beauty, that he burns with impatience to lie at her ladyship's feet and worship the original.

Mira. Excellent Foible! Matrimony has made you eloquent in love.

Wait. I think she has profited, sir. I think so.

Foible. You have seen Madam Millamant, sir?

Mira. Yes.

Foible. I told her, sir, because I did not know that you might find an opportunity. She had so much company last night.

Mira. Your diligence will merit more. In the meantime——

[*Gives money.*]

Foible. Oh, dear sir, your humble servant.

Wait. Spouse!

Mira. Stand off, sir, not a penny. Go on and prosper, *Foible.* The lease shall be made good and the farm stocked if we succeed.

Foible. I don't question your generosity, sir, and you need not doubt of success. If you have no more commands, sir, I'll be gone. I'm sure my lady is at her toilet, and can't dress till I come. Oh, dear, I'm sure that [*looking out*] was Mrs. Marwood that went by in a mask; if she has seen me with you I'm sure she'll tell my lady. I'll make haste home and prevent her. Your servant, sir. Bye, Waitwell.

[*Exit FOIBLE.*]

Wait. Sir Rowland, if you please. The jade's so pert upon her preferment she forgets herself.

Mira. Come, sir, will you endeavour to forget yourself, and transform into Sir Rowland?

Wait. Why, sir, it will be impossible I should remember myself—married, knighted and attended all in one day! 'Tis enough to make any man forget himself. The difficulty will be how to recover my acquaintance and familiarity with my former self, and fall from my transformation to a reformation into Waitwell. Nay, I shan't be quite the same Waitwell neither, for now I remember me I'm married, and can't be my own man again.

Aye, there's my grief, that's the sad change of life,
To lose my title, and yet keep my wife. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT III

Scene I—*A Room in LADY WISHFORT'S House. LADY WISHFORT at her toilet, PEG waiting.*

Lady. Merciful, no news of Foible yet?

Peg. No, madam.

Lady. I have no more patience. If I have not fretted myself till I am pale again, there's no veracity in me. Fetch me the red. The red, do you hear, sweetheart? An arrant ash colour, as I'm a person. Look you how this wench stirs! Why dost thou not fetch me a little red? Didst thou not hear me, mopus?*

Peg. The red ratafia does your ladyship mean, or the cherry-brandy?

Lady. Ratafia, fool! No, fool, not the ratafia, fool. Grant me patience! I mean the spanish paper,† idiot, complexion, darling. Paint, paint, paint! Dost thou understand that, changeling, dangling thy hands like bobbins before thee? Why dost thou not stir, puppet, thou wooden thing upon wires?

Peg. Lord, madam, your ladyship is so impatient. I cannot come at the paint, madam. Mrs. Foible has locked it up, and carried the key with her.

Lady. A pox take you both! Fetch me the cherry-brandy then. [*Exit PEG.*] I'm as pale and as faint—I look like Mrs. Qualmsick, the curate's wife, that's always breeding. Wench, come, come, wench. What art thou doing? Sipping? Tasting? Save thee, dost thou not know the bottle?

Enter PEG with a bottle and china cup

Peg. Madam, I was looking for a cup.

Lady. A cup, save thee, and what a cup hast thou

* Idiot.

† Rouge.

brought! Dost thou take me for a fairy, to drink out of an acorn? Why didst thou not bring thy thimble? Hast thou ne'er a brass thimble clinking in thy pocket with a bit of nutmeg? I warrant thee. Come, fill, fill. So, again. [*One knocks.*] See who that is. Set down the bottle first. Here, here, under the table. What, would'st thou go with the bottle in thy hand like a tapster? As I'm a person, this wench has lived in an inn upon the road before she came to me, like Maritornes the Asturian in *Don Quixote*. No Foible yet?

Peg. No, madam, Mrs. Marwood.

Lady. Oh, Marwood. Let her come in. Come in, good Marwood.

Enter MRS. MARWOOD.

Mrs. Mar. I'm surprised to find your ladyship in *déshabillé* at this time of day.

Lady. Foible's a lost thing; has been abroad since morning, and never heard of since.

Mrs. Mar. I saw her but now, as I came masked through the park, in conference with Mirabell.

Lady. With Mirabell! You call my blood into my face with mentioning that traitor. She durst not have the confidence. I sent her to negotiate an affair in which if I'm detected I'm undone. If that wheedling villain has wrought upon Foible to detect me, I'm ruined. Oh, my dear friend, I'm a wretch of wretches if I'm detected.

Mrs. Mar. Oh, madam, you cannot suspect Mrs. Foible's integrity.

Lady. Oh, he carries poison in his tongue that would corrupt integrity itself. If she has given him an opportunity, she has as good as put her integrity into his hands. Ah, dear Marwood, what's integrity to an opportunity? Hark! I hear her. Dear friend, retire into my closet, that I may examine her with more freedom. You'll pardon me,

dear friend. I can make bold with you. There are books over the chimney: Quarles and Prynne and the Short View of the Stage,* with Bunyan's Works to entertain you. [To PEG.] Go, you thing, and send her in.

[Exit MRS. MARWOOD with PEG.]

Enter FOIBLE.

Lady. Oh, Foible, where hast thou been? What hast thou been doing?

Foible. Madam, I have seen the party.

Lady. But what hast thou done?

Foible. Nay, 'tis your ladyship has done, and are to do; I have only promised. But a man so enamoured, so transported! Well, if worshipping of pictures be a sin, poor Sir Rowland, I say.

Lady. The miniature has been counted like. But hast thou not betrayed me, Foible? Hast thou not detected me to that faithless Mirabell? What hadst thou to do with him in the park? Answer me, has he got nothing out of thee?

Foible [aside]. So, the devil has been beforehand with me. What shall I say? [Aloud.] Alas! madam, could I help it, if I met that confident thing? Was I in fault? If you had heard how he used me, and all upon your ladyship's account, I'm sure you would not suspect my fidelity. Nay, if that had been the worst I could have borne. But he had a fling at your ladyship too, and then I could not hold; but, i'faith, I gave him his own.

Lady. Me? What did the filthy fellow say?

Foible. Oh, madam, 'tis a shame to say what he said, with his taunts and his fleers, tossing up his nose. Humph (says he), what, you are a-hatching some plot (says he), you are

* By Jeremy Collier. An attack, like Prynne's *Histriomastix*, upon the drama. Quarles was the seventeenth century Keble.

so early abroad, or catering (says he), ferreting for some disbanded officer, I warrant? Half-pay is but thin subsistence (says he). Well, what pension does your lady propose? Let me see (says he). What, she must come down pretty deep now, she's superannuated (says he), and——

Lady. Ods, my life, I'll have him, I'll have him murdered. I'll have him poisoned. Where does he eat? I'll marry a drawer to have him poisoned in his wine. I'll send for Robin from Locket's* immediately.

Foible. Poison him? Poisoning's too good for him. Starve him, madam, starve him. Marry Sir Rowland, and get him disinherited. Oh, you would bless yourself to hear what he said.

Lady. A villain. Superannuated!

Foible. Humph (says he), I hear you are laying designs against me too (says he), and Mrs. Millamant is to marry my uncle (he does not suspect a word of your ladyship); but (says he) I'll fit you for that, I warrant you (says he). I'll hamper you for that (says he), you and your old frippery too (says he). I'll handle you.

Lady. Audacious villain! Handle me! Would he durst! Frippery, old frippery! Was there ever such a foul-mouthed fellow? I'll be married to-morrow; I'll be contracted to-night.

Foible. The sooner the better, madam.

Lady. Will Sir Rowland be here, sayest thou? When, Foible?

Foible. Incontinently, madam. No new sheriff's wife expects the return of her husband after knighthood with that impatience in which Sir Rowland burns for the dear hour of kissing your ladyship's hand after dinner.

Lady. Frippery! superannuated frippery! I'll frippery the villain. I'll reduce him to frippery and rags, a tatter-

* A restaurant in Charing Cross.

demallion. I hope to see him hung with tatters, like a Long Lane penthouse,* or a gibbet thief. A slander-mouthed railer! I warrant the spendthrift prodigal's in debt as much as the Million Lottery, or the whole court upon a Birthday. I'll spoil his credit with his tailor. Yes, he shall have my niece with her fortune, he shall.

Foible. He! I hope to see him lodge in Ludgate† first, and angle into Black Friars‡ for brass farthings with an old mitten.

Lady. Aye, dear Foible, thank thee for that, dear Foible. He has put me out of all patience. I shall never recompose my features to receive Sir Rowland with any economy of face. This wretch has fretted me that I am absolutely decayed. Look, Foible.

Foible. Your ladyship has frowned a little too rashly, indeed, madam. There are some cracks discernible in the white varnish.

Lady. Let me see the glass. Cracks, sayest thou? Why, I am arrantly flayed. I look like an old peeled wall. Thou must repair me, Foible, before Sir Rowland comes, or I shall never keep up to my picture.

Foible. I warrant you, madam. A little art once made your picture like you, and now a little of the same art must make you like your picture. Your picture must sit for you, madam.

Lady. But art thou sure Sir Rowland will not fail to come? Or will a not fail when he does come? Will he be importunate, Foible, and push? For if he should not be importunate I shall never break decorums. I shall die with confusion if I am forced to advance. Oh no, I can never

* Between West Smithfield and Barbican. The centre of the old clothes trade.

† The debtors' prison.

‡ The district between Ludgate Hill and the Thames.

advance; I shall swoon if he should expect advances. No, I hope Sir Rowland is better bred than to put a lady to the necessity of breaking her forms. I won't be too coy neither. I won't give him despair. But a little disdain is not amiss; a little scorn is alluring.

Foible. A little scorn becomes your ladyship.

Lady. Yes, but tenderness becomes me best, a sort of dyingness. You see that picture has a sort of a—ha, Foible?—a swimmingness in the eyes. Yes, I'll look so. My niece affects it, but she wants features. Is Sir Rowland handsome? Let my toilet be removed, I'll dress above. I'll receive Sir Rowland here. Is he handsome? Don't answer me. I won't know. I'll be surprised. I'll be taken by surprise.

Foible. By storm, madam. Sir Rowland's a brisk man.

Lady. Is he? Oh, then he'll importune, if he's a brisk man. I shall save decorums if Sir Rowland importunes. I have a mortal terror at the apprehension of offending against decorums. Oh, I'm glad he's a brisk man. Let my things be removed, good Foible. *[Exit.]*

Enter MRS. FAINALL.

Mrs. Fain. Oh, Foible, I have been in a fright lest I should come too late. That devil, Marwood, saw you in the park with Mirabell, and I'm afraid will discover it to my lady.

Foible. Discover what, madam?

Mrs. Fain. Nay, nay, put not on that strange face. I am privy to the whole design, and know Waitwell, to whom thou wert this morning married, is to personate Mirabell's uncle, and as such, winning my lady, to involve her in those difficulties from which Mirabell only must release her by his making his conditions to have my cousin and her fortune left to her own disposal.

Foible. Oh, dear madam, I beg your pardon. It was not my confidence in your ladyship that was deficient, but I thought the former good correspondence between your ladyship and Mr. Mirabell might have hindered his communicating this secret.

Mrs. Fain. Dear Foible, forget that.

Foible. Oh, dear madam, Mr. Mirabell is such a sweet, winning gentleman. But your ladyship is the pattern of generosity. Sweet lady, to be so good! Mr. Mirabell cannot choose but be grateful. I find your ladyship has his heart still. Now, madam, I can safely tell your ladyship our success. Mrs. Marwood has told my lady, but I warrant I managed myself. I turned it all for the better. I told my lady that Mr. Mirabell railed at her. I laid horrid things to his charge, I'll vow, and my lady is so incensed that she'll be contracted to Sir Rowland to-night, she says. I warrant I worked her up that he may have her for asking for, as they say of a Welsh maidenhead.

Mrs. Fain. Oh, rare Foible!

Foible. Madam, I beg your ladyship to acquaint Mr. Mirabell of his success. I would be seen as little as possible to speak to him. Besides, I believe Madam Marwood watches me. She has a month's mind;* but I know Mr. Mirabell can't abide her. [*Calls.*] John, remove my lady's toilet. Madam, your servant. My lady is so impatient, I fear she'll come for me, if I stay.

Mrs. Fain. I'll go with you up the back stairs, lest I should meet her. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter MRS. MARWOOD.

Mrs. Mar. Indeed, Mrs. Engine, is it thus with you? Are you become a go-between of this importance? Yes, I shall watch you. Why, this wench is the *passe-par-tout*, a

* A longing.

very master-key to everybody's strong box. My friend Fainall, have you carried it so swimmingly? I thought there was something in it; but it seems it's over with you. Your loathing is not from a want of appetite then, but from a surfeit, else you could never be so cool to fall from a principal to be an assistant, to procure for him! A pattern of generosity, that I confess. Well, Mr. Fainall, you have met with your match. Oh, man, man! Woman, woman! The devil's an ass. If I were a painter I would draw him like an idiot, a driveller with a bib and bells. Man should have his head and horns, and woman the rest of him. Poor simple fiend! Madam Marwood has a month's mind, but he can't abide her! 'Twere better for him you had not been his confessor in that affair, without you could have kept his counsel closer. I shall not prove another pattern of generosity. He has not obliged me to that with those excesses of himself, and now I'll have none of him. Here comes the good lady, panting ripe, with a heart full of hope and a head full of care, like any chemist upon the day of projection.

Enter LADY WISHFORT.

Lady. Oh, dear Marwood, what shall I say for this rude forgetfulness? But my dear friend is all goodness.

Mrs. Mar. No apologies, dear madam. I have been very well entertained.

Lady. As I'm a person, I am in a very chaos to think I should so forget myself. But I have such an olio of affairs, really I know not what to do. [*Calls.*] Foible! I expect my nephew, Sir Wilfull, every moment too. Why, Foible! He means to travel for improvement.

Mrs. Mar. Methinks Sir Wilfull should rather think of marrying than travelling at his years. I hear he is turned forty.

Lady. Oh, he's in less danger of being spoiled by his travels. I am against my nephew's marrying too young. It will be time enough when he comes back, and has acquired discretion to choose for himself.

Mrs. Mar. Methinks Mrs. Millamant and he would make a very fit match. He may travel afterwards. 'Tis a thing very usual with young gentlemen.

Lady. I promise you I have thought on't, and since 'tis your judgment, I'll think on't again. I assure you I will; I value your judgment extremely. On my word I'll propose it.

Enter FOIBLE.

Lady. Come, come, Foible. I had forgot my nephew will be here before dinner. I must make haste.

Foible. Mr. Witwoud and Mr. Petulant are come to dine with your ladyship.

Lady. Oh dear, I can't appear till I am dressed. Dear Marwood, shall I be free with you again, and beg you to entertain 'em? I'll make all imaginable haste. Dear friend, excuse me. [*Exeunt LADY WISHFORT and FOIBLE.*]

Enter MRS. MILLAMANT and MINCING.

Milla. Sure, never anything was so unbred as that odious man. Marwood, your servant.

Mrs. Mar. You have a colour, what's the matter?

Milla. That horrid fellow, Petulant, has provoked me into a flame. I have broke my fan. Mincing, lend me yours. Is not all the powder out of my hair?

Mrs. Mar. No. What has he done?

Milla. Nay, he has done nothing; he has only talked. Nay, he has said nothing neither; but he has contradicted everything that has been said. For my part, I thought Witwoud and he would have quarrelled.

Minc. I vow, mem, I thought once they would have fit.

Milla. Well, 'tis a lamentable thing, I swear, that one has not the liberty of choosing one's acquaintance as one does one's clothes.

Mrs. Mar. If we had that liberty, we should be as weary of one set of acquaintance, though never so good, as we are of one suit, though never so fine. A fool and a doily* stuff would now and then find days of grace, and be worn for variety.

Milla. I could consent to wear 'em, if they would wear alike, but fools never wear out. They are such drap-de-berry† things! Without one could give 'em to one's chamber-maid after a day or two.

Mrs. Mar. 'Twere better so indeed. Or what think you of the play-house? A fine, gay, glossy fool should be given there, like a new masking habit after the masquerade is over and we have done with the disguise. For a fool's visit is always a disguise, and never admitted by a woman of wit but to blind her affair with a lover of sense. If you would but appear barefaced now and own Mirabell, you might as easily put off Petulant and Witwoud, as your hood and scarf. And indeed 'tis time, for the town has found it. The secret is grown too big for the pretence. 'Tis like Mrs. Primly's great belly, she may lace it down before, but it burnishes on her hips. Indeed, Millamant, you can no more conceal it than my Lady Strammel can her face, that goodly face, which in defiance of her Rhenish wine tea‡ will not be comprehended in a mask.

Milla. I'll take my death, Marwood, you are more censorious than a decayed beauty, or a discarded toast. Mincing, tell the men they may come up. My aunt is not dressing here. Their folly is less provoking than your malice.

* A cheap woollen material.

† A woollen cloth originally made at Berry in France.

‡ White Rhenish wine was taken to reduce corpulence.

[*Exit MINCING.*] The town has found it. What has it found? That Mirabell loves me is no more a secret than it is a secret that you discovered it to my aunt, or than the reason why you discovered it is a secret.

Mrs. Mar. You are nettled.

Milla. You're mistaken. Ridiculous!

Mrs. Mar. Indeed, my dear, you'll tear another fan, if you don't mitigate those violent airs.

Milla. Oh, silly! Ha, ha, ha! I could laugh immoderately. Poor Mirabell! His constancy to me has quite destroyed his complaisance for all the world beside. I swear I never enjoined it him to be so coy. If I had the vanity to think he would obey me, I would command him to show more gallantry. 'Tis hardly well bred to be so particular on one hand and so insensible on the other. But I despair to prevail, and so let him follow his own way. Ha, ha, ha! Pardon me, dear creature, I must laugh. Ha, ha, ha! Though I grant you 'tis a little barbarous. Ha, ha, ha!

Mrs. Mar. What pity 'tis so much fine raillery, and delivered with so significant gesture, should be so unhappily directed to miscarry.

Milla. Ha? Dear creature, I ask your pardon. I swear I did not mind you.

Mrs. Mar. Mr. Mirabell and you both may think it a thing impossible, when I shall tell him by telling you——

Milla. Oh, dear, what? For it is the same thing, if I hear it. Ha, ha, ha!

Mrs. Mar. That I detest him, hate him, madam.

Milla. Oh, madam, why so do I. And yet the creature loves me. Ha, ha, ha! How can one forbear laughing to think of it? I am a Sybil if I am not amazed to think what he can see in me. I'll take my death, I think you are handsomer, and within a year or two as young. If you could but stay for me, I should overtake you. But that cannot be.

Well, that thought makes me melancholic. Now I'll be sad.

Mrs. Mar. Your merry note may be changed sooner than you think.

Milla. Do you say so? Then I'm resolved I'll have a song to keep up my spirits.

Enter MINCING.

Minc. The gentlemen stay but to comb, madam, and will wait on you.

Milla. Desire Mrs. —, that is in the next room, to sing the song I would have learnt yesterday. You shall hear it madam. Not that there's any great matter in it, but 'tis agreeable to my humour.

Love's but the frailty of the mind,
When 'tis not with ambition joined;
A sickly flame, which if not fed expires,
And feeding, wastes in self-consuming fires.

'Tis not to wound a wanton boy
Or amorous youth, that gives the joy;
But 'tis the glory to have pierced a swain,
For whom inferior beauties sighed in vain.

Then I alone the conquest prize,
When I insult a rival's eyes:
If there's delight in love, 'tis when I see
That heart which others bleed for, bleed for me.

Enter PETULANT and WITWOUD.

Milla. Is your animosity composed, gentlemen?

Wit. Raillery, raillery, madam, we have no animosity. We hit off a little wit now and then, but no animosity. The falling out of wits is like the falling out of lovers. We agree in the main, like treble and bass. Ha, Petulant?

Pet. Aye, in the main, but when I have a humour to contradict——

Wit. Aye, when he has a humour to contradict then I contradict too. What, I know my cue. Then we contradict one another like two battle dores, for contradictions beget one another like Jews.

Pet. If he says black's black—if I have a humour to say 'tis blue—let that pass; all's one for that. If I have a humour to prove it, it must be granted.

Wit. Not positively must, but it may, it may.

Pet. Yes, it positively must, upon proof positive.

Wit. Aye, upon proof positive it must; but upon proof presumptive it only may. That's a logical distinction now, madam.

Mrs. Mar. I perceive your debates are of importance, and very learnedly handled.

Pet. Importance is one thing, and learning's another; but a debate's a debate, that I assert.

Wit. Petulant's an enemy to learning; he relies altogether on his parts.

Pet. No, I'm no enemy to learning; it hurts not me.

Mrs. Mar. That's a sign indeed it's no enemy to you.

Pet. No, no, it's no enemy to anybody but them that have it.

Milla. Well, an illiterate man's my aversion; I wonder at the impudence of any illiterate man to offer to make love.

Wit. That, I confess, I wonder at too.

Milla. Ah! to marry an ignorant that can hardly read or write!

Pet. Why should a man be any further from being married, though he can't read, than he is from being hanged? The Ordinary's paid for setting the Psalm, and the parish-priest for reading the ceremony. And for the rest which is

to follow in both cases, a man may do it without book. So all's one for that.

Milla. Do you hear the creature? Lord, here's company; I'll be gone.

[*Exeunt MILLAMANT and MINCING.*

Enter SIR WILFULL WITWOUND, in a riding dress, and FOOTMAN.

Wit. In the name of Bartlemew and his fair,* what have we here?

Mrs. Mar. 'Tis your brother, I fancy. Don't you know him?

Wit. Not I. Yes, I think it is he. I've almost forgot him; I have not seen him since the Revolution.

Foot. Sir, my lady's dressing. Here's company, if you please to walk in, in the meantime.

Sir Wil. Dressing? What, it's but morning here I warrant with you in London. We should count it towards afternoon in our parts down in Shropshire. Why then, belike my aunt ha'n't dined yet, ha, friend?

Foot. Your aunt, sir?

Sir Wil. My aunt, sir, yes, my aunt, sir, and your lady, sir; your lady is my aunt, sir. Why, what dost thou not know me, friend? Why, then send somebody hither that does. How long hast thou lived with thy lady, fellow, ha?

Foot. A week, sir; longer than anybody in the house, except my lady's woman.

Sir Wil. Why then, belike thou dost not know thy lady, if thou see'st her, ha, friend?

Foot. Why, truly sir, I cannot safely swear to her face in a morning, before she is dressed. 'Tis like I may give a shrewd guess at her by this time.

* Bartholomew Fair was held at Smithfield annually for a fortnight from August 22nd.

Sir Wil. Well, prithee, try what thou canst do. If thou canst not guess, enquire her out, dost hear, fellow? And tell her her nephew, Sir Wilfull Witwoud, is in the house.

Foot. I shall, sir.

Sir Wil. Hold ye, hear me, friend. A word with you in your ear. Prithee, who are these gallants?

Foot. Really, sir, I can't tell. There come so many here, 'tis hard to know 'em all. [Exit.

Sir Wil. Ooons, this fellow knows less than a starling; I don't think a knows his own name.

Mrs. Mar. Mr. Witwoud, your brother is not behind-hand in forgetfulness. I fancy he has forgot you too.

Wit. I hope so. The devil take him that remembers first, I say.

Sir Wil. Save you, gentlemen and lady.

Mrs. Mar. For shame, Mr. Witwoud. Why don't you speak to him? And you, sir.

Wit. Petulant, speak.

Pet. And you, sir.

Sir Wil. No offence, I hope. [Salutes MARWOOD.

Mrs. Mar. No, sure, sir.

Wit. This is a vile dog, I see that already. No offence! Ha, ha, ha! To him, to him, Petulant, smoke him.

Pet. It seems as if you had come a journey, sir. Hem, hem. [Surveying him round.

Sir Wil. Very likely, sir, that it may seem so.

Pet. No offence, I hope, sir.

Wit. Smoke the boots, the boots.* Petulant, the boots. Ha, ha, ha!

Sir Wil. Maybe not, sir. Thereafter as 'tis meant, sir.

Pet. Sir, I presume upon the information of your boots.

Sir Wil. Why, 'tis like you may, sir. If you are not

* "Smoke him, smoke him again, to affront a stranger at his coming in." Dictionary of the Canting Crew (Summers).

satisfied with the information of my boots, sir, if you will step to the stable, you may enquire further of my horse, sir.

Pet. Your horse, sir! Your horse is an ass, sir!

Sir Wil. Do you speak by way of offence, sir?

Mrs. Mar. The gentleman's merry, that's all, sir. [*Aside.*] 'Slife, we shall have a quarrel betwixt an horse and an ass, before they find one another out. [*Aloud.*] You must not take anything amiss from your friends, sir. You are among your friends, here, though it may be you don't know it. If I am not mistaken, you are Sir Wilfull Witwoud.

Sir Wil. Right, lady; I am Sir Wilfull Witwoud, so I write myself, no offence to anybody, I hope, and nephew to the Lady Wishfort of this mansion.

Mrs. Mar. Don't you know this gentleman, sir?

Sir Wil. Hum! What, sure 'tis not—yea, by our lady, but 'tis. 'Sheart, I know not whether 'tis or no. Yes, but 'tis, by the Wrekin. Brother Antony! What, Tony, i'faith! What, dost thou not know me? By our lady, nor I thee, thou art so be-cravated, and so be-perriwigged. 'Sheart, why dost not speak? Art thou o'erjoyed?

Wit. Odso, brother, is it you? Your servant, brother.

Sir Wil. Your servant! Why yours, sir. Your servant again. 'Sheart, and your friend, and servant to that. And a—[*puff*—and a flap dragon for your service, sir, and a hare's foot, and a hare's scut* for your service, sir, if you be so cold and so courtly.

Wit. No offence, I hope, brother.

Sir Wil. 'Sheart, sir, but there is, and much offence. A pox, is this your Inns o' Court breeding, not to know your friends and your relations, your elders, and your betters?

Wit. Why, brother Wilfull of Salop, you may be as

* A hare's tail.

short as a Shrewsbury cake, if you please. But I tell you 'tis not modish to know relations in town. You think you're in the country, where great lubberly brothers slabber and kiss one another when they meet, like a call of sergeants. 'Tis not the fashion here; 'tis not indeed, dear brother.

Sir Wil. The fashion's a fool, and you're a fop, dear brother. 'Sheart, I've suspected this. By our lady, I conjectured you were a fop, since you began to change the style of your letters, and write in a scrap of paper gilt round the edges, no bigger than a subpoena.* I might expect this when you left off honoured brother, and hoping you are in good health, and so forth, to begin with a rat me, knight, I'm so sick of a last night's debauch. Od's heart, and then tell a familiar tale of a cock and a bull, and a whore and a bottle, and so conclude. You could write news before you were out of your time, when you lived with honest Pimple Nose, the attorney of Furnival's Inn. You could entreat to be remembered then to your friends round the Wrekin. We could have gazettes then, and Dawks's Letter,† and the Weekly Bill,‡ till of late days.

Pet. 'Slife, Witwoud, were you ever an attorney's clerk? Of the family of the Furnivals? Ha, ha, ha!

Wit. Aye, aye, but that was but for a while. Not long, not long. Pshaw! I was not in my own power then. An orphan, and this fellow was my guardian. Aye, aye, I was glad to consent to that man to come to London. He had the disposal of me then. If I had not agreed to that I might have been bound 'prentice to a felt-maker in Shrewsbury. This fellow would have bound me to a maker of felts.

Sir Wil. 'Sheart, and better than to be bound to a maker

* A writ to summon a witness.

† A newspaper printed in longhand with a large country circulation.

‡ i.e., the Bill of Mortality for London, published weekly.

of fops, where, I suppose, you have served your time, and now you may set up for yourself.

Mrs. Mar. You intend to travel, sir, as I'm informed.

Sir Wil. Belike I may, madam. I may chance to sail upon the salt seas, if my mind hold.

Pet. And the wind serve.

Sir Wil. Serve or not serve, I shan't ask license of you, sir, nor the weathercock, your companion. I direct my discourse to the lady, sir. 'Tis like my aunt may have told you, madam. Yes, I have settled my concerns, I may say now, and am minded to see foreign parts. If and how that the peace holds, whereby that is taxes abate.

Mrs. Mar. I thought you had designed for France at all adventures.

Sir Wil. I can't tell that. 'Tis like I may, and 'tis like I may not. I am somewhat dainty in making a resolution, because when I make it I keep it. I don't stand shilly-shally, then. If I say 't, I'll do 't. But I have thoughts to tarry a small matter in town to learn somewhat of your lingo first, before I cross the seas. I'd gladly have a spice of your French, as they say, whereby to hold discourse in foreign countries.

Mrs. Mar. Here's an academy in town for that use.

Sir Wil. There is? 'Tis like there may.

Mrs. Mar. No doubt you will return very much improved.

Wit. Yes, refined like a Dutch skipper from a whale fishing.

Enter LADY WISHFORT and FAINALL.

Lady. Nephew, you are welcome.

Sir Wil. Aunt, your servant.

Fain. Sir Wilfull, your most faithful servant.

Sir Wil. Cousin Fainall, give me your hand.

Lady. Cousin Witwoud, your servant. Mr. Petulant,

your servant. Nephew, you are welcome again. Will you drink anything after your journey, nephew, before you eat? Dinner's almost ready.

Sir Wil. I'm very well, I thank you, aunt. However, I thank you for your courteous offer. 'Sheart, I was afraid you would have been in the fashion too, and have remembered to have forgot your relations. Here's your cousin, Tony, belike, I mayn't call him brother for fear of offence.

Lady. Oh, he's a rallier, nephew. My cousin's a wit, and your great wits always rally their best friends to choose. When you have been abroad, nephew, you'll understand raillery better.

[*FAINALL and MRS. MARWOOD talk apart.*]

Sir Wil. Why then, let him hold his tongue in the meantime, and rail when that day comes.

Enter MINCING.

Minc. Mem, I come to acquaint your la'ship that dinner is impatient.

Sir Wil. Impatient? Why then, belike it won't stay till I pull off my boots. Sweetheart, can you help me to a pair of slippers? My man's with his horses, I warrant.

Lady. Fie, fie, nephew, you would not pull off your boots here. Go down into the hall. Dinner shall stay for you. My nephew's a little unbred, you'll pardon him, madam. Gentlemen, will you walk? Marwood?

Mrs. Mar. I'll follow you, madam, before Sir Wilfull is ready.

Fain. Why then, Foible's a bawd, an arrant, rank, matchmaking bawd. And I, it seems, am a husband, a rank husband, and my wife a very arrant, rank wife—all in the way of the world. 'Sdeath, to be a cuckold by anticipation, a cuckold in embryo! Sure I was born with bud-

ding antlers like a young satyr, or a citizen's child. 'Sdeath, to be out-witted, to be out-jilted, out-matrimonied! If I had kept my speed, like a stag, 'twere somewhat; but to crawl after, with my horns like a snail, and be outstripped by my wife, 'tis scurvy wedlock.

Mrs. Mar. Then shake it off. You have often wished for an opportunity to part, and now you have it. But first prevent their plot; the half of Millamant's fortune is too considerable to be parted with to a foe, to Mirabell.

Fain. Damn him, that had been mine had you not made that fond discovery. That had been forfeited, had they been married. My wife had added lustre to my horns by that increase of fortune. I could have worn 'em tipped with gold, though my forehead had been furnished like a deputy lieutenant's hall.

Mrs. Mar. They may prove a cap of maintenance* to you still, if you can away with your wife. And she's no worse than when you had her. I dare swear she had given up her game before she was married.

Fain. Hum! that may be.

Mrs. Mar. You married her to keep you, and if you can contrive to have her keep you better than you expected, why should you not keep her longer than you intended?

Fain. The means, the means.

Mrs. Mar. Discover to my lady your wife's conduct; threaten to part with her. My lady loves her, and will come to any composition to save her reputation. Take the opportunity of breaking it just upon the discovery of this imposture. My lady will be enraged beyond bounds, and sacrifice niece, and fortune, and all at that conjuncture. And let me alone to keep her warm! If she should flag in her part, I will not fail to prompt her.

* A heraldic term. The *cap* had two points behind, like the cuckold's horns.

Fain. Faith, this has an appearance.

Mrs. Mar. I'm sorry I hinted to my lady to endeavour a match between Millamant and Sir Wilfull. That may be an obstacle.

Fain. Oh, for that matter leave me to manage him; I'll disable him for that. He will drink like a Dane. After dinner I'll set his hand in.

Mrs. Mar. Well, how do you stand affected towards your lady?

Fain. Why, faith, I'm thinking of it. Let me see. I am married already, so that's over; my wife has played the jade with me, well, that's over too; I never loved her, or if I had, why that would have been over too by this time. Jealous of her I cannot be, for I am certain, so there's an end of jealousy. Weary of her, I am and shall be. No, there's no end of that. No, no, that were too much to hope. Thus far concerning my repose. Now for my reputation. As to my own, I married not for it, so that's out of the question, and as to my part in my wife's—— Why, she had parted with hers before, so bringing none to me, she can take none from me. 'Tis against all rule of play, that I should lose to one who has not wherewithal to stake.

Mrs. Mar. Besides, you forget, marriage is honourable.

Fain. Hum! Faith, and that's well thought on. Marriage is honourable, as you say, and if so, wherefore should cuckoldom be a discredit, being derived from so honourable a root?

Mrs. Mar. Nay, I know not. If the root be honourable why not the branches?

Fain. So, so, why this point's clear. Well, how do we proceed?

Mrs. Mar. I will contrive a letter which shall be delivered to my lady at the time when that rascal who is to act Sir Rowland is with her. It shall come as from an un-

known hand, for the less I appear to know of the truth, the better I can play the incendiary. Besides, I would not have Foible provoked if I could help it, because you know she knows some passages. Nay, I expect all will come out. But let the mine be sprung first, and then I care not if I am discovered.

Fain. If the worst come to the worst, I'll turn my wife to grass. I have already a deed of settlement of the best part of her estate, which I wheedled out of her, and that you shall partake at least.

Mrs. Mar. I hope you are convinced that I hate Mirabell now. You'll be no more jealous?

Fain. Jealous, no, by this kiss. Let husbands be jealous, but let the lover still believe, or if he doubt, let it be only to endear his pleasure, and prepare the joy that follows when he proves his mistress true. But let husbands' doubts convert to endless jealousy, or if they have belief, let it corrupt to superstition and blind credulity. I am single and will herd no more with 'em. True, I wear the badge, but I'll disown the order. And since I take my leave of 'em, I care not if I leave 'em a common motto to their common crest.

All husbands must or pain or shame endure;

The wise too jealous are, fools too secure.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV

Scene I—*A Room in LADY WISHFORT'S House.*

Enter LADY WISHFORT and FOIBLE.

Lady. Is Sir Rowland coming sayest thou, Foible? And are things in order?

Foible. Yes, madam. I have put wax lights in the sconces, and placed the footmen in a row in the hall, in their best

liveries, with the coachman and postillion to fill up the equipage.

Lady. Have you pullvilled* the coachman and postillion, that they may not stink of the stable, when Sir Rowland comes by?

Foible. Yes, madam.

Lady. And are the dancers and the music ready, that he may be entertained in all points with correspondence to his passion?

Foible. All is ready, madam.

Lady. And—well—and how do I look, Foible?

Foible. Most killing well, madam.

Lady. Well, and how shall I receive him? In what figure shall I give his heart the first impression? There is a great deal in the first impression. Shall I sit? No, I won't sit. I'll walk, aye, I'll walk from the door upon his entrance, and then turn full upon him. No, that will be too sudden. I'll lie, aye, I'll lie down. I'll receive him in my little dressing-room, there's a couch. Yes, yes, I'll give the first impression on a couch. I won't lie neither, but loll and lean upon one elbow, with one foot a little dangling off, jogging in a thoughtful way. Yes, and then as soon as he appears, start, aye, start and be surprised, and rise to meet him in a pretty disorder. Yes, oh nothing is more alluring than a levee from a couch in some confusion. It shows the foot to advantage, and furnishes with blushes, and recomposing airs beyond comparison. Hark! there's a coach.

Foible. 'Tis he, madam.

Lady. Oh dear, has my nephew made his addresses to Millamant? I ordered him.

Foible. Sir Wilfull is set in to drinking, madam, in the parlour.

* Scented.

Lady. Ods, my life, I'll send him to her. Call her down, Foible; bring her hither. I'll send him as I go. When they are together, then come to me, Foible, that I may not be too long alone with Sir Rowland. [*Exit.*]

Enter MRS. MILLAMANT *and* MRS. FAINALL.

Foible. Madam, I stayed here to tell your ladyship that Mr. Mirabell has waited this half-hour for an opportunity to talk with you, though my lady's orders were to leave you and Sir Wilfull together. Shall I tell Mr. Mirabell that you are at leisure?

Milla. No. What would the dear man have? I am thoughtful, and would amuse myself. Bid him come another time. [*Repeating and walking about.*]

There never yet was woman made,
Nor shall, but to be cursed.*

That's hard!

Mrs. Fain. You are very fond of Sir John Suckling to-day, Millamant, and the poets?

Milla. He? Aye, and filthy verses. So I am.

Foible. Sir Wilfull is coming, madam. Shall I send Mr. Mirabell away?

Milla. Aye, if you please, Foible, send him away, or send him hither, just as you will, dear Foible. I think I'll see him. Shall I? Aye, let the wretch come. [*Exit* FOIBLE.]

[*Repeating.*] Thyrsis, a youth of the inspired train.†
Dear Fainall, entertain Sir Wilfull. Thou hast philosophy to undergo a fool; thou art married and hast patience. I would confer with my own thoughts.

Mrs. Fain. I am obliged to you, that you would make me your proxy in this affair; but I have business of my own.

* The opening lines of a poem by Sir John Suckling.

† The first line of "The Story of Phæbus and Daphne, applied" by Edmund Waller.

Enter SIR WILFULL.

Mrs. Fain. Oh, Sir Wilfull, you are come at the critical instant. There's your mistress up to the ears in love and contemplation. Pursue your point now or never.

[*This while MILLAMANT walks about, repeating to herself.*

Sir Wil. Yes: my aunt will have it so. I would gladly have been encouraged with a bottle or two, because I'm somewhat wary at first, before I am acquainted. But I hope, after a time, I shall break my mind, that is, upon further acquaintance. So for the present, cousin, I'll take my leave, if so be you'll be so kind to make my excuse. I'll return to my company.

Mrs. Fain. Oh, fie, Sir Wilfull! What, you must not be daunted?

Sir Wil. Daunted! No, that's not it, it is not so much for that, for if so be that I set on't, I'll do 't. But only for the present, 'tis sufficient till further acquaintance, that's all. Your servant.

Mrs. Fain. Nay, I'll swear you shall never lose so favourable an opportunity, if I can help it. I'll leave you together, and lock the door. [*Exit.*

Sir Wil. Nay, nay, cousin. I have forgot my gloves. What d'ye do? 'Sheart, she has locked the door indeed, I think. Nay, cousin Fainall, open the door. Pshaw! what a vixen trick is this? Nay, now she has seen me too. Cousin, I made bold to pass through, as it were. I think this door's enchanted.

Milla. [*repeating*]. I prithee spare me, gentle boy,
Press me no more for that slight toy.

Sir Wil. Anan? * Cousin, your servant.

Milla. [*repeating*]. That foolish trifle of a heart.
Sir Wilfull!

Sir Wil. Yes, your servant. No offence, I hope, cousin.

* Anon, i.e., I beg your pardon?

Milla. [*repeating*]. I swear it will not do its part,

Though thou dost thine, employest thy power and art.*
Natural, easy Suckling.

Sir Wil. Anan? Suckling? No such suckling, neither, cousin, nor stripling. I thank Heaven I'm no minor.

Milla. Ah, rustic, ruder than Gothic!

Sir Wil. Well, well, I shall understand your lingo one of these days, cousin. In the meanwhile I must answer in plain English.

Milla. Have you any business with me, Sir Wilfull?

Sir Wil. Not at present, cousin. Yes, I made bold to see, to come and know if that how you were disposed to fetch a walk this evening. If so be that I might not be troublesome, I would have sought a walk with you.

Milla. A walk? What then?

Sir Wil. Nay, nothing. Only for the walk's sake, that's all.

Milla. I nauseate walking. 'Tis a country diversion; I loathe the country and everything that relates to it.

Sir Wil. Indeed! Ha! Look ye, look ye, you do? Nay, 'tis like you may. Here are choice of pastimes, here in town, as plays and the like, that must be confessed indeed.

Milla. Ah, *l'étourdi*! I hate the town too.

Sir Wil. Dear heart, that's much. Ha! That you should hate 'em both! Ha! 'Tis like you may; there are some can't relish the town, and others can't away with the country. 'Tis like you may be one of those, cousin.

Milla. Ha, ha, ha! Yes, 'tis like I may. You have nothing further to say to me?

Sir Wil. Not at present, cousin. 'Tis like when I have an opportunity to be more private, I may break my mind in some measure. I conjecture you partly guess. However,

* The five lines make up the opening verse of a "Song" by Suckling.

that's as time shall try. But spare to speak and spare to speed, as they say.

Milla. If it is of no great importance, Sir Wilfull, you will oblige me to leave me. I have just now a little business.

Sir Wil. Enough, enough, cousin. Yes, yes, all a case. When you're disposed, when you're disposed. Now's as well as another time, and another time as well as now. All's one for that. Yes, yes, if your concerns call you, there's no haste; it will keep cold, as they say. Cousin, your servant. I think this door's locked.

Milla. You may go this way, sir.

Sir Wil. Your servant. Then with your leave I'll return to my company. [Exit.

Milla. Aye, aye. Ha, ha, ha!

Like Phœbus sung the no less amorous boy.

Enter MIRABELL.

Mira. Like Daphne she, as lovely and as coy.* Do you lock yourself up from me to make my search more curious? Or is this pretty artifice contrived to signify that here the chase must end, and my pursuit be crowned, for you can fly no further?

Milla. Vanity! No, I'll fly and be followed to the last moment, though I am upon the very verge of matrimony. I expect you should solicit me as much as if I were wavering at the grate of a monastery, with one foot over the threshold. I'll be solicited to the very last, nay, and afterwards.

Mira. What, after the last?

Milla. Oh, I should think I was poor and had nothing to bestow, if I were reduced to an inglorious ease, and freed from the agreeable fatigues of solicitation.

Mira. But do not you know that when favours are con-

* The third and fourth lines of the same poem by Waller.

ferred upon instant and tedious solicitation, that they diminish in their value, and that both the giver loses the grace and the receiver lessens his pleasure?

Milla. It may be in things of common application, but never sure in love. Oh, I hate a lover that can dare to think he draws a moment's air independent on the bounty of his mistress. There is not so impudent a thing in nature as the saucy look of an assured man, confident of success. The pedantic arrogance of a very husband has not so pragmatical an air. Ah, I'll never marry, unless I am first made sure of my will and pleasure.

Mira. Would you have 'em both before marriage, or will you be contented with the first now, and stay for the other till after grace?

Milla. Ah, don't be impertinent. My dear liberty, shall I leave thee? My faithful solitude, my darling contemplation, must I bid you then adieu? Aye, adieu. My morning thoughts, agreeable wakings, indolent slumbers, all ye *douceurs*, ye *sommeils du matin*, adieu. I can't do 't, 'tis more than impossible. Positively, Mirabell, I'll lie a-bed in a morning as long as I please.

Mira. Then I'll get up in a morning as early as I please.

Milla. Ah, idle creature, get up when you will. And, d'ye hear, I won't be called names after I'm married, positively I won't be called names.

Mira. Names?

Milla. Aye, as wife, spouse, my dear, joy, jewel, love, sweetheart, and the rest of that nauseous cant, in which men and their wives are so fulsomely familiar. I shall never bear that. Good Mirabell, don't let us be familiar or fond, nor kiss before folks, like my Lady Fadler and Sir Francis; nor go to Hyde Park together the first Sunday in a new chariot to provoke eyes and whispers, and then never be seen there together again, as if we were proud of one

another the first week, and ashamed of one another ever after. Let us never visit together, nor go to a play together, but let us be very strange and well bred. Let us be as strange as if we had been married a great while, and as well bred as if we were not married at all.

Mira. Have you any more conditions to offer? Hitherto your demands are pretty reasonable.

Milla. Trifles, as liberty to pay and receive visits to and from whom I please; to write and receive letters without interrogatories or wry faces on your part; to wear what I please, and choose conversation with regard only to my own taste; to have no obligation upon me to converse with wits that I don't like, because they are your acquaintance, or to be intimate with fools, because they may be your relations; come to dinner when I please; dine in my dressing-room when I'm out of humour, without giving a reason; to have my closet inviolate; to be sole empress of my tea-table, which you must never presume to approach without first asking leave; and lastly, wherever I am, you shall always knock at the door before you come in. These articles subscribed, if I continue to endure you a little longer, I may by degrees dwindle into a wife.

Mira. Your bill of fare is something advanced in this latter account. Well, have I liberty to offer conditions, that when you are dwindled into a wife, I may not be beyond measure enlarged into a husband?

Milla. You have free leave. Propose your utmost. Speak and spare not.

Mira. I thank you. *Imprimis* then, I covenant that your acquaintance be general; that you admit no sworn confidant or intimate of your own sex; no she-friend to screen her affairs under your countenance, and tempt you to make trial of a mutual secrecy; no decoy-duck to wheedle you a fop, scrambling to the play in a mask, then bring you home

in a pretended fright, when you think you shall be found out, and rail at me for missing the play, and disappointing the frolic which you had to pick me up and prove my constancy.

Milla. Detestable *imprimis!* I go to the play in a mask!

Mira. Item, I article that you continue to like your own face as long as I shall, and while it passes current with me, that you endeavour not to new coin it. To which end, together with all vizards for the day, I prohibit all masks for the night, made of oiled skins and I know not what—hog's bones, hare's gall, pig water, and the marrow of a roasted cat. In short, I forbid all commerce with the gentlewoman in what-d'ye-call-it Court. Item, I shut my doors against all bawds with baskets, and pennyworth's of muslin, china, fans, atlases,* etc. Item, when you shall be breeding——

Milla. Ah! Name it not.

Mira. Which may be presumed, with a blessing on our endeavours——

Milla. Odious endeavours!

Mira. I denounce against all straight-lacing, squeezing for a shape, till you mould my boy's head like a sugar-loaf, and instead of a man-child make me father to a crooked-billet. Lastly, to the dominion of the tea-table I submit, but with proviso that you exceed not in your province, but restrain yourself to native and simple tea-table drinks, as tea, chocolate, and coffee. As likewise to genuine and authorised tea-table talk, such as mending of fashions, spoiling reputations, railing at absent friends, and so forth. But that on no account you encroach upon the men's prerogative, and presume to drink healths, or toast fellows; for prevention of which I banish all foreign forces, all auxiliaries to the tea-table, as orange brandy, all aniseed,

* A kind of satin.

cinnamon, citron and Barbados waters, together with ratafia and the most noble spirit of clary.* But for cowslip wine, poppy water, and all dormitives, those I allow. These provisos admitted, in other things I may prove a tractable and complying husband.

Milla. Oh, horrid provisos! Filthy strong waters! I toast fellows, odious men! I hate your odious provisos.

Mira. Then we're agreed. Shall I kiss your hand upon the contract? And here comes one to be a witness to the sealing of the deed.

Enter MRS. FAINALL.

Milla. Fainall, what shall I do? Shall I have him? I think I must have him.

Mrs. Fain. Aye, aye, take him, take him, what should you do?

Milla. Well, then, I'll take my death I'm in a horrid fright. Fainall, I shall never say it. Well, I think I'll endure you.

Mrs. Fain. Fie, fie, have him, have him, and tell him so in plain terms, for I am sure you have a mind to him.

Milla. Are you? I think I have, and the horrid man looks as if he thought so too. Well, you ridiculous thing, you, I'll have you. I won't be kissed, nor I won't be thanked. Here, kiss my hand though. So, hold your tongue now; don't say a word.

Mrs. Fain. Mirabell, there's a necessity for your obedience. You have neither time to talk nor stay. My mother is coming, and in my conscience if she should see you would fall into fits, and maybe not recover time enough to return to Sir Rowland, who, as Foible tells me, is in a fair way to succeed. Therefore spare your ecstasies for another occa-

* These "auxiliaries" were made up of brandy and various flavourings—orange-peel, lemon-peel, aniseed, sage ("clary"), etc.

sion, and slip down the back stairs, where Foible waits to consult you.

Milla. Aye, go, go. In the meantime I suppose you have said something to please me.

Mira. I am all obedience. [Exit MIRABELL.

Mrs. Fain. Yonder Sir Wilfull's drunk, and so noisy that my mother has been forced to leave Sir Rowland to appease him; but he answers her only with singing and drinking. What they may have done by this time I know not; but Petulant and he were upon quarrelling as I came by.

Milla. Well, if Mirabell should not make a good husband, I am a lost thing, for I find I love him violently.

Mrs. Fain. So it seems, for you mind not what's said to you. If you doubt him, you had best take up with Sir Wilfull.

Milla. How can you name that superannuated lubber? Foh!

Enter WITWOUND, from drinking.

Mrs. Fain. So, is the fray made up, that you have left 'em?

Wit. Left 'em? I could stay no longer. I have laughed like ten christenings. I am tipsy with laughing. If I had stayed any longer I should have burst. I must have been let out and pieced in the sides like an unsized camlet* Yes, yes, the fray is composed. My lady came in like a *nolle prosequi*† and stopped the proceedings.

Milla. What was the dispute?

Wit. That's the jest; there was no dispute. They could neither of 'em speak for rage, and so fell a spluttering at one another like two roasting apples.

Enter PETULANT, drunk.

* A rough material, originally made of camel-hair.

† The entry made when a plaintiff abandons his suit.

Wit. Now, Petulant, all's over, all's well? Gad, my head begins to whim it about. Why dost thou not speak? Thou art both as drunk and as mute as a fish.

Pet. Look you, Mrs. Millamant, if you can love me, dear nymph, say it, and that's the conclusion. Pass on, or pass off, that's all.

Wit. Thou hast uttered volumes, folios, in less than *decimo sexto*, my dear Lacedemonian. Sirrah Petulant, thou art an epitomizer of words.

Pet. Witwoud, you are an annihilator of sense.

Wit. Thou art a retailer of phrases, and dost deal in remnants of remnants, like a maker of pincushions; thou art, in truth (metaphorically speaking), a speaker of short-hand.

Pet. Thou art (without a figure) just one half of an ass, and Baldwin* yonder, thy half-brother, is the rest. A Gemini of asses split would make just four of you.

Wit. Thou dost bite, my dear mustard-seed. Kiss me for that.

Pet. Stand off. I'll kiss no more males. I have kissed your twin yonder in a humour of reconciliation, till he [*hiccup*] rises upon my stomach like a radish.

Milla. Eh, filthy creature! What was the quarrel?

Pet. There was no quarrel; there might have been a quarrel.

Wit. If there had been words enough between 'em to have expressed provocation, they had gone together by the ears, like a pair of castanets.

Pet. You were the quarrel.

Milla. Me?

Pet. If I have a humour to quarrel, I can make less matters conclude premises. If you are not handsome, what then, if I have a humour to prove it? If I shall have my

* The ass in *Reynard the Fox*.

reward, say so; if not, fight for your face the next time yourself. I'll go sleep.

Wit. Do, wrap thyself up like a wood-louse, and dream revenge. And hear me, if thou canst learn to write by to-morrow morning, pen me a challenge. I'll carry it for thee.

Pet. Carry your mistress's monkey a spider. Go, flay dogs, and read romances. I'll go to bed to my maid. [*Exit.*]

Mrs. Fain. He's horridly drunk. How came you all in this pickle?

Wit. A plot, a plot, to get rid of the knight. Your husband's advice, but he sneaked off.

Enter LADY WISHFORT *and* SIR WILFULL, *drunk.*

Lady. Out upon 't, out upon 't, at years of discretion, and comport yourself at this rantipole* rate!

Sir Wil. No offence, aunt.

Lady. Offence? As I'm a person, I'm ashamed of you. Foh! how you stink of wine! Do you think my niece will ever endure such a borachio?† You're an absolute borachio.

Sir Wil. Borachio?

Lady. At a time when you should commence an amour, and put your best foot foremost.

Sir Wil. 'Sheart, an you grudge me your liquor, make a bill. Give me more drink, and take my purse. [*Sings.*]

Prithee, fill me the glass
Till it laugh in my face,
With ale that is potent and mellow;
He that whines for a lass
Is an ignorant ass,
For a bumper has not its fellow.

But if you would have me marry my cousin, say the word,

* Wild.

† Drunkard.

and I'll do 't. Wilfull will do 't, that's the word. Wilfull will do 't, that's my crest, my motto I have forgot.

Lady. My nephew's a little overtaken, cousin; but 'tis with drinking your health. O' my word you are obliged to him.

Sir Wil. In *vino veritas*, aunt. If I drunk your health to-day, cousin, I am a borachio. But if you have a mind to be married, say the word, and send for the piper. Wilfull will do 't. If not, dust it away, and let's have tother round. Tony, ods-heart, where's Tony? Tony's an honest fellow, but he spits after a bumper, and that's a fault. [*Sings.*] We'll drink and we'll never have done, boys,

Put the glass then around with the sun, boys,
Let Apollo's example invite us;
For he's drunk every night,
And that makes him so bright,
That he's able next morning to light us.

The sun's a good pimple, an honest soaker. He has a cellar at your Antipodes. If I travel, aunt, I touch at your Antipodes. Your Antipodes are a good rascally sort of topsy-turvy fellows. If I had a bumper I'd stand upon my head and drink a health to 'em. A match or no match, cousin, with the hard name. Aunt, Wilfull will do 't. If she has her maidenhead let her look to 't; if she has not, let her keep her own counsel in the meantime, and cry out at the nine months' end.

Milla. Your pardon, madam, I can stay no longer. Sir Wilfull grows very powerful. Ugh! how he smells. I shall be overcome, if I stay. Come, cousin.

[*Exeunt* MILLAMANT and MRS. FAINALL.]

Lady. Smells! He would poison a tallow-chandler and his family. Beastly creature, I know not what to do with him. Travel, quoth a! Aye, travel, travel, get thee gone; get

thee but far enough, to the Saracens, or the Tartars, or the Turks, for thou art not fit to live in a Christian commonwealth, thou beastly pagan.

Sir Wil. Turks, no, no Turks, aunt. Your Turks are infidels, and believe not in the grape. Your Mahometan, your Mussulman is a dry stinkard. No offence, aunt. My map says that your Turk is not so honest a man as your Christian. I cannot find by the map that your mufti is orthodox. Whereby it is a plain case, that orthodox is a hard word, aunt, and [*hiccup*] Greek for claret. [*Sings.*]

To drink is a Christian diversion,
Unknown to the Turk or the Persian;
Let Mahometan fools
Live by heathenish rules,
And be damned over tea-cups and coffee;
But let British lads sing,
Crown a health to the king,
And a fig for your Sultan and Sophy.*

Ah, Tony!

Enter FOIBLE and whispers LADY WISHFORT.

Lady [*aside*]. Sir Rowland impatient? Good lack! What shall I do with this beastly tumbril? [*Aloud.*] Go, lie down and sleep, you sot, or as I'm a person I'll have you bastinadoed with broomsticks. Call up the wenches with broomsticks.

Sir Wil. Aha! Wenches, where are the wenches?

Lady. Dear cousin Witwoud, get him away, and you will bind me to you invioably. I have an affair of moment that invades me with some precipitation. You will oblige me to all futurity.

Wit. Come, knight. Pox on him, I don't know what to say to him. Will you go to a cock match?

* Shah.

Sir Wil. With a wench, Tony? Is she a shake-bag, sirrah? Let me bite your cheek for that.

Wit. Horrible! He has a breath like a bagpipe. Aye, aye, come, will you march, my Salopian?

Sir Wil. Lead on, little Tony. I'll follow thee, my Anthony, my Tantony. Sirrah, thou shalt be my Tantony, and I'll be thy pig†

And a fig for your Sultan and Sophy.

[*Exit singing, with WITWOUND.*]

Lady. This will never do. It will never make a match. At least before he has been abroad.

Enter WAITWELL disguised as for SIR ROWLAND.

Lady. Dear Sir Rowland, I am confounded with confusion at the retrospection of my own rudeness. I have more pardons to ask than the Pope distributes in the year of Jubilee. But I hope where there is likely to be so near an alliance, we may unbend the severity of decorum, and dispense with a little ceremony.

Wait. My impatience, madam, is the effect of my transport, and till I have the possession of your adorable person, I am tantalised on the rack, and do but hang, madam, on the tenter of expectation.

Lady. You have excess of gallantry, Sir Rowland, and press things to a conclusion with a most prevailing vehemence. But a day or two for decency of marriage——

Wait. For decency of funeral, madam. The delay will break my heart, or if that should fail, I shall be poisoned. My nephew will get an inkling of my designs and poison me, and I would willingly starve him before I die. I would gladly go out of the world with that satisfaction. That would be some comfort to me, if I could but live so long as to be revenged on that unnatural viper.

† St. Antony the Great gave his name to the Tantony pig.

Lady. Is he so unnatural, say you? Truly I would contribute much both to the saving of your life and the accomplishment of your revenge. Not that I respect myself, though he has been a perfidious wretch to me.

Wait. Perfidious to you?

Lady. Oh, Sir Rowland, the hours that he has died away at my feet, the tears that he has shed, the oaths that he has sworn, the palpitations that he has felt, the trances and the tremblings, the ardours and the ecstasies, the kneelings and the risings, the heart-heavings and the hand-grippings, the pangs and the pathetic regards of his protesting eyes! Oh! no memory can register!

Wait. What, my rival? Is the rebel my rival? A dies.

Lady. No, don't kill him at once, Sir Rowland, starve him gradually inch by inch.

Wait. I'll do 't. In three weeks he shall be barefoot; in a month out at knees with begging an alms. He shall starve upward and upward, till he has nothing living but his head, and then go out in a stink like a candle's end upon a save-all.*

Lady. Well, Sir Rowland, you have the way. You are no novice in the labyrinth of love. You have the clue. But as I am a person, Sir Rowland, you must not attribute my yielding to any sinister appetite, or indigestion of widowhood, nor impute my complacency to any lethargy of continence. I hope you do not think me prone to any iteration of nuptials.

Wait. Far be it from me——

Lady. If you do, I protest I must recede. Or think that I have made a prostitution of decorums, but in the vehemence of compassion, and to save the life of a person of so much importance——

Wait. I esteem it so.

* A contrivance to hold a candle in such a way that it will all be burnt.

Lady. Or else you wrong my condescension.

Wait. I do not, I do not.

Lady. Indeed you do.

Wait. I do not, fair shrine of virtue.

Lady. If you think the least scruple of carnality was an ingredient——

Wait. Dear madam, no. You are all camphire* and frankincense, all chastity and odour.

Lady. Or that——

Enter FOIBLE.

Foible. Madam, the dancers are ready, and there's one with a letter, who must deliver it into your own hands.

Lady. Sir Rowland, will you give me leave? Think favourably, judge candidly, and conclude you have found a person who would suffer racks in honour's cause, dear Sir Rowland, and will wait on you incessantly. [*Exit.*

Wait. Fie, fie! What a slavery have I undergone! Spouse, hast thou any cordial? I want spirits.

Foible. What a washy rogue art thou to pant thus for a quarter of an hour's lying and swearing to a fine lady!

Wait. Oh, she is the antidote to desire. Spouse, thou wilt fare the worse for 't. I shall have no appetite to iteration of nuptials this eight-and-forty hours. By this hand, I'd rather be a chairman in the dog-days than act Sir Rowland till this time to-morrow.

Enter LADY WISHFORT with a letter.

Lady. Call in the dancers. Sir Rowland, we'll sit, if you please, and see the entertainment. [*Dance.*] Now, with your permission, Sir Rowland, I will peruse my letter. I would open it in your presence, because I would not make you uneasy. If it should make you uneasy I would burn it. Speak if it does. But you may see the superscription is like a woman's hand.

* That "causeth impotency unto venery." *Vulgar Errors* (Dobrée).

Foible [to him]. By Heaven, Mrs. Marwood's! I know it. My heart aches. Get it from her.

Wait. A woman's hand? No, madam, that's no woman's hand; I see that already. That's somebody whose throat must be cut.

Lady. Nay, Sir Rowland, since you give me a proof of your passion by your jealousy, I promise you I'll make a return by a frank communication. You shall see it. We'll open it together. Look you here. [*Reads.*] "Madam, though unknown to you"—look you there, 'tis from nobody that I know—"I have that honour for your character that I think myself obliged to let you know you are abused. He who pretends to be Sir Rowland is a cheat and a rascal." Oh heavens! what's this?

Foible. Unfortunate! All's ruined.

Wait. How, how? Let me see, let me see. [*Reading.*] "A rascal and disguised, and suborned for that imposture"—oh, villany! oh, villany!—"by the contrivance of——"

Lady. I shall faint; I shall die. Oh!

Foible [to him]. Say 'tis your nephew's hand, quickly, his plot. Swear, swear it.

Wait. Here's a villain! Madam, don't you perceive it, don't you see it?

Lady. Too well, too well. I have seen too much.

Wait. I told you at first I knew the hand. A woman's hand! The rascal writes a sort of a large hand, your Roman hand. I saw there was a throat to be cut presently. If he were my son, as he is my nephew, I'd pistol him.

Foible. Oh, treachery! But are you sure, Sir Rowland, it is his writing?

Wait. Sure? Am I here? Do I live? Do I love this pearl of India? I have twenty letters in my pocket from him in the same character.

Lady. How?

Foible. Oh, what luck it is, Sir Rowland, that you were present at this juncture! This was the business that brought Mr. Mirabell disguised to Madam Millamant this afternoon. I thought something was contriving when he stole by me and would have hid his face.

Lady. How, how? I heard the villain was in the house indeed. And now I remember, my niece went away abruptly, when Sir Wilfull was to have made his addresses.

Foible. Then, then, madam, Mr. Mirabell waited for her in her chamber; but I would not tell your ladyship to discompose you when you were to receive Sir Rowland.

Wait. Enough, his date is short.

Foible. No, good Sir Rowland, don't incur the law.

Wait. Law! I care not for law. I can but die, and 'tis in a good cause. My lady shall be satisfied of my truth and innocence, though it cost me my life.

Lady. No, dear Sir Rowland, don't fight. If you should be killed I must never show my face. Or hanged! Oh, consider my reputation, Sir Rowland. No, you shan't fight. I'll go in and examine my niece; I'll make her confess. I conjure you, Sir Rowland, by all your love not to fight.

Wait. I am charmed, madam; I obey. But some proof you must let me give you. I'll go for a black box, which contains the writings of my whole estate, and deliver that into your hands.

Lady. Aye, dear Sir Rowland, that will be some comfort; bring the black box.

Wait. And may I presume to bring a contract to be signed this night? May I hope so far?

Lady. Bring what you will; but come alive, pray come alive. Oh, this is a happy discovery.

Wait. Dead or alive I'll come, and married we will be in spite of treachery; aye, and get an heir that shall defeat

the last remaining glimpse of hope in my abandoned nephew. Come, my buxom widow:

Ere long you shall substantial proof receive

That I'm an errant knight——

Foible [*aside*]. Or arrant knave. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT V

Scene I—*A Room in LADY WISHFORT'S House.*

Enter LADY WISHFORT and FOIBLE.

Lady. Out of my house, out of my house, thou viper, thou serpent, that I have fostered! Thou bosom traitress, that I raised from nothing! Begone, begone, begone! Go, go! That I took from washing of old gauze and weaving of dead hair, with a bleak blue nose, over a chafing-dish of starved embers, and dining behind a traverse rag, in a shop no bigger than a bird-cage! Go, go, starve again, do, do!

Foible. Dear madam, I'll beg pardon on my knees.

Lady. Away! Out, out, go set up for yourself again, do! Drive a trade, do, with your threepenny-worth of small ware, flaunting upon a packthread, under a brandy-seller's bulk, or against a dead wall by a ballad-monger. Go, hang out an old frisoner-gorget,* with a yard of yellow colbert-teen† again, do, an old gnawed mask, two rows of pins and a child's fiddle, a glass necklace with the beads broken, and a quilted nightcap with one ear. Go, go, drive a trade! These were your commodities, you treacherous trull! This was the merchandise you dealt in when I took you into my house, placed you next myself, and made you governante of my whole family. You have forgot this, have you, now you have feathered your nest?

Foible. No, no, dear madam. Do but hear me, have but

* A *gorget* is a wimple. *Frison* was a coarse woollen material.

† A cheap French lace.

a moment's patience. I'll confess all. Mr. Mirabell seduced me; I am not the first that he has wheedled with his dissembling tongue. Your ladyship's own wisdom has been deluded by him, then how should I, a poor ignorant, defend myself? Oh, madam, if you knew but what he promised me, and how he assured me your ladyship should come to no damage. Or else the wealth of the Indies should not have bribed me to conspire against so good, so sweet, so kind a lady as you have been to me.

Lady. No damage? What, to betray me, to marry me to a cast-serving-man, to make me a receptacle, an hospital for a decayed pimp! No damage? Oh, thou frontless impudence, more than a big-bellied actress.

Foible. Pray do but hear me, madam. He could not marry your ladyship, madam. No, indeed, his marriage was to have been void in law, for he was married to me first, to secure your ladyship. He could not have bedded your ladyship, for if he had consummated with your ladyship, he must have run the risk of the law, and been put upon his clergy. Yes, indeed, I enquired of the law in that case before I would meddle or make.

Lady. What! Then I have been your property, have I? I have been convenient to you, it seems, while you were catering for Mirabell? I have been broker for you? What, have you made a passive bawd of me? This exceeds all precedent; I am brought to fine uses to become a botcher of second-hand marriages between Abigails and Andrews! I'll couple you. Yes, I'll baste you together, you and your Philander.* I'll Duke's Place you, as I'm a person. Your turtle is in custody already. You shall coo in the same cage, if there be constable or warrant in the parish. *[Exit.]*

* Lady Wishfort knew her Beaumont and Fletcher. Abigail is the maid in *The Scornful Lady*; Andrew is the servant in *The Elder Brother*; and Philander is the lover in *The Laws of Candy*.

Foible. Oh, that ever I was born! Oh, that I was ever married! A bride, aye, I shall be a Bridewell bride. Oh!

Enter MRS. FAINALL.

Mrs. Fain. Poor Foible, what's the matter?

Foible. Oh, madam, my lady's gone for a constable; I shall be had to a justice, and put to Bridewell* to beat hemp. Poor Waitwell's gone to prison already.

Mrs. Fain. Have a good heart, Foible. Mirabell's gone to give security for him. This is all Marwood's and my husband's doing.

Foible. Yes, yes, I know it, madam. She was in my lady's closet, and overheard all that you said to me before dinner. She sent the letter to my lady, and that missing effect, Mr. Fainall laid this plot to arrest Waitwell, when he pretended to go for the papers, and in the meantime Mrs. Marwood declared all to my lady.

Mrs. Fain. Was there no mention made of me in the letter? My mother does not suspect my being in the confederacy? I fancy Marwood has not told her, though she has told my husband.

Foible. Yes, madam, but my lady did not see that part; we stifled the letter before she read so far. Has that mischievous devil told Mr. Fainall of your ladyship then?

Mrs. Fain. Aye, all's out, my affair with Mirabell, everything discovered. This is the last day of our living together, that's my comfort.

Foible. Indeed, madam, and so 'tis a comfort if you knew all. He has been even with your ladyship, which I could have told you long enough since, but I love to keep peace and quietness by my goodwill. I had rather bring friends together, than set 'em at distance. But Mrs. Marwood and he are nearer related than ever their parents thought for.

* Near Blackfriar's Bridge. It was then a house of correction.

Mrs. Fain. Sayest thou so, Foible? Canst thou prove this?

Foible. I can take my oath of it, madam, so can Mrs. Mincing. We have had many a fair word from Madam Marwood to conceal something that passed in our chamber one evening when you were at Hyde Park, and we were thought to have gone a-walking. But we went up unawares, though we were sworn to secrecy too. Madam Marwood took a book and swore us upon it. But it was but a book of poems. So long as it was not a Bible-oath we may break it with a safe conscience.

Mrs. Fain. This discovery is the most opportune thing I could wish. Now, Mincing?

Enter MINCING.

Minc. My lady would speak with Mrs. Foible, mem. Mr. Mirabell is with her; he has set your spouse at liberty, Mrs. Foible, and would have you hide yourself in my lady's closet till my old lady's anger is abated. Oh, my old lady is in perilous passion at something Mr. Fainall has said. He swears, and my old lady cries. There's a fearful hurricane, I vow. He says, mem, that he'll have my lady's fortune made over to him, or he'll be divorced.

Mrs. Fain. Does your lady or Mirabell know that?

Minc. Yes, mem, they have sent me to see if Sir Wilfull be sober, and to bring him to them. My lady is resolved to have him, I think, rather than lose such a vast sum as six thousand pounds. Oh, come, Mrs. Foible, I hear my old lady.

Mrs. Fain. Foible, you must tell Mincing that she must prepare to vouch when I call her.

Foible. Yes, yes, madam.

Minc. Oh yes, mem, I'll vouch anything for your ladyship's service, be what it will.

[*Exeunt MINCING and FOIBLE.*]

Enter LADY WISHFORT and MARWOOD.

Lady. Oh, my dear friend, how can I enumerate the benefits I have received from your goodness? To you I owe the timely discovery of the false vows of Mirabell. To you I owe the detection of the impostor, Sir Rowland. And now you are become an intercessor with my son-in-law to save the honour of my house and compound for the frailties of my daughter. Well, friend, you are enough to reconcile me to the bad world, or else I would retire to deserts and solitudes, and feed harmless sheep by groves and purling streams. Dear Marwood, let us leave the world, and retire by ourselves and be shepherdesses.

Mrs. Mar. Let us first despatch the affair in hand, madam. We shall have leisure to think of retirement afterwards. Here is one who is concerned in the treaty.

Lady. Oh, daughter, daughter, is it possible thou shouldst be my child, bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh, and as I may say, another me, and yet transgress the most minute particle of severe virtue? Is it possible you should lean aside to iniquity, who have been cast in the direct mould of virtue? I have not only been a mould but a pattern for you, and a model for you, after you were brought into the world.

Mrs. Fain. I don't understand your ladyship.

Lady. Not understand? Why, have you not been naught? Have you not been sophisticated? Not understand? Here I am ruined to compound for your caprices and cuckoldoms. I must pawn my plate and my jewels, and ruin my niece, and all little enough——

Mrs. Fain. I am wronged and abused, and so are you. 'Tis a false accusation, as false as hell, as false as your friend there, aye, or your friend's friend, my false husband.

Mrs. Mar. My friend, Mrs. Fainall? Your husband my friend? What do you mean?

Mrs. Fain. I know what I mean, madam, and so do you, and so shall the world at a time convenient.

Mrs. Mar. I am sorry to see you so passionate, madam. More temper would look more like innocence. But I have done. I am sorry my zeal to serve your ladyship and family should admit of misconstruction, or make me liable to affronts. You will pardon me, madam, if I meddle no more with an affair in which I am not personally concerned.

Lady. Oh, dear friend, I am so ashamed that you should meet with such returns. You ought to ask pardon on your knees, ungrateful creature; she deserves more from you than all your life can accomplish. Oh, don't leave me destitute in this perplexity. No, stick to me, my good genius.

Mrs. Fain. I tell you, madam, you're abused. Stick to you? Aye, like a leech, to suck your best blood; she'll drop off when she's full. Madam, you shan't pawn a bodkin, nor part with a brass counter in composition for me. I defy 'em all. Let 'em prove their aspersions. I know my own innocence, and dare stand a trial. [Exit.]

Lady. Why, if she should be innocent, if she should be wronged after all, ha? I don't know what to think, and I promise you her education has been unexceptionable. I may say it, for I chiefly made it my own care to initiate her very infancy in the rudiments of virtue, and to impress upon her tender years a young odium and aversion to the very sight of men. Aye, friend, she would ha' shrieked if she had but seen a man, till she was in her teens. As I'm a person 'tis true. She was never suffered to play with a male child, though but in coats; nay, her very babies* were of the feminine gender. Oh, she never looked a man in the face but her own father, or the chaplain, and him we made a shift to put upon her for a woman, by the help of his long

* Dolls.

garments and his sleek face, till she was going in her fifteen.

Mrs. Mar. 'Twas much she should be deceived so long.

Lady. I warrant you, or she would never have borne to have been catechised by him, and have heard his long lectures against singing and dancing, and such debaucheries, and going to filthy plays and profane music meetings, where the lewd trebles squeak nothing but bawdy, and the basses roar blasphemy. Oh, she would have swooned at the sight or name of an obscene play book, and can I think after all this that my daughter can be naught? What, a whore? And thought it excommunication to set her foot within the door of a playhouse. Oh, dear friend, I can't believe it, no, no. As she says, let him prove it, let him prove it.

Mrs. Mar. Prove it, madam? What, and have your name prostituted in a public court, yours and your daughter's reputation worried at the bar by a pack of bawling lawyers? To be ushered in with an Oyez of scandal, and have your case opened by an old fumbling lecher in a quoif,* like a man midwife, to bring your daughter's infamy to light; to be a theme for legal punsters and quibblers by the statute, and become a jest, against a rule of court, where there is no precedent for a jest in any record, not even in Doomsday Book; to discompose the gravity of the bench, and provoke naughty interrogatories in more naughty law Latin, while the good judge, tickled with the proceeding, simpers under a grey beard, and fidgets off and on his cushion as if he had swallowed cantharides or sat upon cow-itch!†

Lady. Oh, 'tis very hard.

Mrs. Mar. And then to have my young revellers of the

* The white cap formerly worn by lawyers.

† Cowage. A stinging tropical plant.

Temple take notes, like prentices at a conventicle,* and after talk it over again in Commons, or before drawers in an eating house!

Lady. Worse and worse.

Mrs. Mar. Nay, this is nothing; if it would end here 'twere well. But it must after this be consigned by the shorthand writers to the public press, and from thence be transferred to the hands, nay into the throats and lungs of hawkers, with voices more licentious than the loud flounderman's.† And this you must hear till you are stunned. Nay, you must hear nothing else for some days.

Lady. Oh, 'tis insupportable. No, no, dear friend, make it up, make it up. Aye, aye, I'll compound. I'll give up all, myself and my all, my niece and her all, anything, everything for composition.

Mrs. Mar. Nay, madam, I advise nothing. I only lay before you, as a friend, the inconveniences which perhaps you have overseen. Here comes Mr. Fainall. If he will be satisfied to huddle up all in silence, I shall be glad. You must think I would rather congratulate than condole with you.

Enter FAINALL.

Lady. Aye, aye, I do not doubt it, dear Marwood. No, no, I do not doubt it.

Fain. Well, madam, I have suffered myself to be overcome by the importunity of this lady, your friend, and am content you shall enjoy your own proper estate during life, on condition you oblige yourself never to marry, under such penalty as I think convenient.

* An apprentice was then required to take notes of the Sunday sermon for his master's benefit.

† A historical character. "His voice was loud, but not unmusical: the tones in lengthening out the word *flounders* were so happily varied that people heard him with surprise and some degree of pleasure" (T. Davies).

Lady. Never to marry?

Fain. No more Sir Rowlands. The next imposture may not be so timely detected.

Mrs. Mar. That condition I dare answer my lady will consent to without difficulty; she has already but too much experienced the perfidiousness of men. Besides, madam, when we retire to our pastoral solitude we shall bid adieu to all other thoughts.

Lady. Aye, that's true. But in case of necessity, as of health, or some such emergency?

Fain. Oh, if you are prescribed marriage, you shall be considered; I will only reserve to myself the power to choose for you. If your physic be wholesome it matters not who is your apothecary. Next, my wife shall settle on me the remainder of her fortune not made over already, and for her maintenance depend entirely on my discretion.

Lady. This is most inhumanly savage, exceeding the barbarity of a Muscovite husband.

Fain. I learned it from his Czarish Majesty's retinue* in a winter evening's conference over brandy and pepper, amongst other secrets of matrimony and policy, as they are at present practised in the northern hemisphere. But this must be agreed unto, and that positively. Lastly, I will be endowed, in right of my wife, with that six thousand pounds which is the moiety of Mrs. Millamant's fortune in your possession, and which she has forfeited, as will appear by the last will and testament of your deceased husband, Sir Jonathan Wishfort, by her disobedience in contracting herself against your consent or knowledge, and by refusing the offered match with Sir Wilfull Witwoud which you, like a careful aunt, had provided for her.

Lady. My nephew was *non compos*, and could not make his addresses.

* Peter the Great paid his famous visit to England in 1697.

Fain. I come to make demands; I'll hear no objections.

Lady. You will grant me time to consider?

Fain. Yes, while the instrument is drawing, to which you must set your hand till more sufficient deeds can be perfected, which I will take care shall be done with all possible speed. In the meanwhile I will go for the said instrument, and till my return you may balance this matter in your own discretion. [Exit FAINALL.]

Lady. This insolence is beyond all precedent, all parallel. Must I be subject to this merciless villain?

Mrs. Mar. 'Tis severe indeed, madam, that you should smart for your daughter's wantonness.

Lady. 'Twas against my consent that she married this barbarian, but she would have him, though her year was not out. Ah! her first husband, my son Languish, would not have carried it thus. Well, that was my choice, this is hers; she is matched now with a witness. I shall be mad, dear friend. Is there no comfort for me? Must I live to be confiscated at this rebel rate? Here come two more of my Egyptian plagues too.

Enter MILLAMANT and SIR WILFULL.

Sir Wil. Aunt, your servant.

Lady. Out, caterpillar, call not me aunt; I know thee not.

Sir Wil. I confess I have been a little in disguise, as they say. 'Sheart, and I'm sorry for 't. What would you have? I hope I committed no offence, aunt, and if I did I am willing to make satisfaction, and what can a man say fairer? If I have broke anything I'll pay for 't, an it cost a pound. And so let that content for what's past, and make no more words. For what's to come, to pleasure you I'm willing to marry my cousin. So pray let's all be friends. She and I are agreed upon the matter before a witness.

Lady. How's this, dear niece? Have I any comfort? Can this be true?

Milla. I am content to be a sacrifice to your repose, madam, and to convince you that I had no hand in the plot, as you were misinformed, I have laid my commands on Mirabell to come in person, and be a witness that I give my hand to this flower of knighthood, and for the contract that passed between Mirabell and me, I have obliged him to make a resignation of it in your ladyship's presence. He is without, and waits your leave for admittance.

Lady. Well, I'll swear I am something revived at this testimony of your obedience; but I cannot admit that traitor. I fear I cannot fortify myself to support his appearance. He is as terrible to me as a Gorgon; if I see him I fear I shall turn to stone, petrify incessantly.

Milla. If you disoblige him he may resent your refusal, and insist upon the contract still. Then 'tis the last time he will be offensive to you.

Lady. Are you sure it will be the last time? If I were sure of that. Shall I never see him again?

Milla. Sir Wilfull, you and he are to travel together, are you not?

Sir Wil. 'Sheart, the gentleman's a civil gentleman, aunt, let him come in. Why, we are sworn brothers and fellow-travellers. We are to be Pylades and Orestes, he and I. He is to be my interpreter in foreign parts. He has been overseas once already, and with proviso that I marry my cousin, will cross 'em once again only to bear me company. 'Sheart, I'll call him in. An I set on't once he shall come in, and see who'll hinder him. [*Goes to the door and hems.*]

Mrs. Mar. [*aside*]. This is precious fooling, if it would pass; but I'll know the bottom of it.

Lady. Oh, dear Marwood, you are not going?

Mrs. Mar. Not far, madam; I'll return immediately. [*Exit*]

Re-enter SIR WILFULL and MIRABELL.

Sir Wil. Look up, man, I'll stand by you. 'Sbud, if she do frown, she can't kill you. Besides, harkee, she dare not frown desperately, because her face is none of her own; 'sheart, and she should, her forehead would wrinkle like the coat of a cream-cheese. But mum for that, fellow-traveller.

Mira. If a deep sense of the many injuries I have offered to so good a lady, with a sincere remorse and a hearty contrition, can but obtain the least glance of compassion, I am too happy. Ah, madam, there was a time — But let it be forgotten. I confess I have deservedly forfeited the high place I once held of sighing at your feet. Nay, kill me not by turning from me in disdain; I come not to plead for favour, nay, not for pardon, I am a suppliant only for pity. I am going where I never shall behold you more.

Sir Wil. How, fellow-traveller? You shall go by yourself then.

Mira. Let me be pitied first, and afterwards forgotten. I ask no more.

Sir Wil. By our lady, a very reasonable request, and will cost you nothing, aunt. Come, come, forgive and forget, aunt. Why you must an you are a Christian.

Mira. Consider, madam, in reality you could not receive much prejudice. It was an innocent device, though I confess it had a face of guiltiness; it was at most an artifice which love contrived, and errors which love produces have ever been accounted venial. At least think it is punishment enough that I have lost what in my heart I hold most dear, that to your cruel indignation I have offered up this beauty, and with her my peace and quiet, nay, all my hopes of future comfort.

Sir Wil. An he does not move me, would I may never be o' the quorum! An it were not as good a deed as to drink, to

give her to him again, I would I might never take shipping. Aunt, if you don't forgive quickly, I shall melt, I can tell you that. My contract went no farther than a little mouth glue, and that's hardly dry. One doleful sigh more from my fellow-traveller and 'tis dissolved.

Lady. Well, nephew, upon your account. Ah, he has a false insinuating tongue. Well, sir, I will stifle my just resentment at my nephew's request. I will endeavour what I can to forget, but on proviso that you resign the contract with my niece immediately.

Mira. It is in writing and with papers of concern; but I have sent my servant for it, and will deliver it to you with all acknowledgments for your transcendent goodness.

Lady [aside]. Oh, he has witchcraft in his eyes and tongue. When I did not see him I could have bribed a villain to his assassination; but his appearance rakes the embers which have so long lain smothered in my breast.

Enter FAINALL and MRS. MARWOOD.

Fain. Your date of deliberation, madam, is expired. Here is the instrument. Are you prepared to sign?

Lady. If I were prepared, I am not empowered. My niece exerts a lawful claim, having matched herself by my direction to Sir Wilfull.

Fain. That sham is too gross to pass on me, though 'tis imposed on you, madam.

Milla. Sir, I have given my consent.

Mira. And, sir, I have resigned my pretensions.

Sir Wil. And, sir, I assert my right, and will maintain it in defiance of you, sir, and of your instrument. 'Sheart, an you talk of an instrument, sir, I have an old fox* by my thigh shall hack your instrument of ram vellum to shreds, sir. It shall not be sufficient for a mittimus† or a tailor's

* Sword.

† The warrant of commitment to prison.

measure. Therefore withdraw your instrument, sir, or by our lady I shall draw mine.

Lady. Hold, nephew, hold.

Milla. Good Sir Wilfull, respite your valour.

Fain. Indeed? Are you provided of your guard, with your single beefeater there? But I'm prepared for you, and insist upon my first proposal. You shall submit your own estate to my management, and absolutely make over my wife's to my sole use, as pursuant to the purport and tenor of this other covenant. I suppose, madam, your consent is not requisite in this case; nor, Mr. Mirabell, your resignation; nor, Sir Wilfull, your right? You may draw your fox, if you please, sir, and make a bear garden flourish somewhere else, for here it will not avail. This, my Lady Wishfort, must be subscribed, or your darling daughter's turned adrift, like a leaky hulk to sink or swim, as she and the current of this lewd town can agree.

Lady. Is there no means, no remedy, to stop my ruin? Ungrateful wretch! Dost thou not owe thy being, thy subsistence, to my daughter's fortune?

Fain. I'll answer you when I have the rest of it in my possession.

Mira. But that you would not accept of a remedy from my hands. I own I have not deserved you should owe any obligation to me, or else perhaps I could advise——

Lady. Oh, what, what? To save me and my child from ruin, from want, I'll forgive all that's past. Nay, I'll consent to anything to come, to be delivered from this tyranny.

Mira. Aye, madam, but that is too late. My reward is intercepted. You have disposed of her who only could have made me a compensation for all my services. But, be it as it may, I am resolved I'll serve you. You shall not be wronged in this savage manner.

Lady. How, dear Mr. Mirabell? Can you be so generous at last? But it is not possible. Harkee, I'll break my nephew's match. You shall have my niece yet, and all her fortune, if you can but save me from this imminent danger.

Mira. Will you? I take you at your word. I ask no more. I must have leave for two criminals to appear.

Lady. Aye, aye, anybody, anybody.

Mira. Foible is one, and a penitent.

Enter MRS. FAINALL, FOIBLE, and MINCING.

Mrs. Mar. [*to FAINALL*]. Oh, my shame! These corrupt things are brought hither to expose me.

[*MIRABELL and LADY WISHFORT go to MRS. FAINALL and FOIBLE.*]

Fain. If it must all come out, why let 'em know it. 'Tis but the way of the world. That shall not urge me to relinquish or abate one tittle of my terms. No, I will insist the more.

Foible. Yes, indeed, madam, I'll take my Bible oath of it.

Minc. And so will I, mem.

Lady. Oh, Marwood, Marwood, art thou false? My friend deceive me? Hast thou been a wicked accomplice with that profligate man?

Mrs. Mar. Have you so much ingratitude and injustice to give credit against your friend to the aspersions of two such mercenary trulls?

Minc. Mercenary, mem? I scorn your words. 'Tis true we found you and Mr. Fainall in the blue garret. By the same token you swore us to secrecy upon *Messalinas's Poems*.* Mercenary? No, if we would have been mercenary, we should have held our tongues. You would have bribed us sufficiently.

Fain. Go, you are an insignificant thing. Well, what

* Mincing meant *miscellaneous*.

are you the better for this? Is this Mr. Mirabell's expedient? I'll be put off no longer. You, thing, that was a wife, shall smart for this. I will not leave thee wherewithal to hide thy shame. Your body shall be naked as your reputation.

Mrs. Fain. I despise you, and defy your malice. You have aspersed me wrongfully. I have proved your falsehood. Go, you and your treacherous—— I will not name it; but starve together, perish!

Fain. Not while you are worth a groat, indeed, my dear. Madam, I'll be fooled no longer.

Lady. Ah, Mr. Mirabell, this is small comfort, the detection of this affair.

Mira. Oh, in good time. Your leave for the other offender and penitent to appear, madam.

Enter WAITWELL with a box of writings.

Lady. Oh, Sir Rowland! Well, rascal?

Wait. What you ladyship pleases. I have brought the black box at last, madam.

Mira. Give it me. Madam, you remember your promise?

Lady. Aye, dear sir.

Mira. Where are the gentlemen?

Wait. At hand, sir, rubbing their eyes, just risen from sleep.

Fain. 'Sdeath, what's this to me? I'll not wait your private concerns.

Enter PETULANT and WITWOUD.

Pet. How now? What's the matter? Who's hand's out?

Wit. Hey-day! What, are you all got together, like players at the end of the last act?

Mira. You may remember, gentlemen, I once requested your hands as witnesses to a certain parchment?

Wit. Aye, I do. My hand I remember; Petulant set his mark.

Mira. You wrong him; his name is fairly written, as shall appear. You do not remember, gentlemen, anything of what that parchment contained? [*Undoing the box.*]

Wit. No.

Pet. Not I, I writ; I read nothing.

Mira. Very well, now you shall know. Madam, your promise?

Lady. Aye, aye, sir, upon my honour.

Mira. Mr. Fainall, it is now time that you should know that your lady, while she was at her own disposal, and before you had by your insinuations wheedled her out of a pretended settlement of the greatest part of her fortune——

Fain. Sir, pretended?

Mira. Yes, sir. I say that this lady while a widow, having it seems received some cautions respecting your inconstancy and tyranny of temper, which from her own partial opinion and fondness of you she could never have suspected, she did, I say, by the wholesome advice of friends and of sages learned in the laws of this land, deliver this same as her act and deed to me in trust, and to the uses within mentioned. You may read if you please—[*holding out the parchment*]—though perhaps what is written on the back may serve your occasions.

Fain. Very likely, sir. What's here? Damnation! [*Reads.*] "A deed of conveyance of the whole estate real of ARABELLA LANGUISH, widow, in trust to EDWARD MIRABELL." Confusion!

Mira. Even so, sir, 'tis the way of the world, sir, of the widows of the world. I suppose this deed may bear an elder date than what you have obtained from your lady?

Fain. Perfidious fiend! Then thus I'll be revenged.

[*Offers to run at MRS. FAINALL.*]

Sir Wil. Hold, sir, now you may make your bear garden flourish somewhere else, sir.

Fain. Mirabell, you shall hear of this, sir, be sure you shall. Let me pass, oaf. [Exit.]

Mrs. Fain. Madam, you seem to stifle your resentment. You had better give it vent.

Mrs. Mar. Yes, it shall have vent, and to your confusion, or I'll perish in the attempt. [Exit.]

Lady. Oh, daughter, daughter, 'tis plain thou hast inherited thy mother's prudence.

Mrs. Fain. Thank Mr. Mirabell, a cautious friend, to whose advice all is owing.

Lady. Well, Mr. Mirabell, you have kept your promise, and I must perform mine. First I pardon for your sake Sir Rowland there and Foible. The next thing is to break the matter to my nephew, and how to do that——

Mira. For that, madam, give yourself no trouble. Let me have your consent. Sir Wilfull is my friend. He has had compassion upon lovers, and generously engaged a volunteer in this action for our service, and now designs to prosecute his travels.

Sir Wil. 'Sheart, aunt, I have no mind to marry. My cousin's a fine lady, and the gentleman loves her, and she loves him, and they deserve one another. My resolution is to see foreign parts. I have set on't, and when I'm set on't, I must do 't. And if these two gentlemen would travel too, I think they may be spared.

Pet. For my part, I say little. I think things are best off or on.

Wit. Egad, I understand nothing of the matter. I'm in a maze yet, like a dog in a dancing-school.

Lady. Well, sir, take her, and with her all the joy I can give you.

Milla. Why does not the man take me? Would you have me give myself to you over again?

Mira. Aye, and over and over again. [*Kisses her hand.*] I would have you as often as possibly I can. Well, Heaven grant I love you not too well, that's all my fear.

Sir Wil. 'Sheart, you'll have time enough to toy after you're married; or if you will toy now, let us have a dance in the meantime, that we who are not lovers may have some other employment, besides looking on.

Mira. With all my heart, dear Sir Wilfull. What shall we do for music?

Foible. Oh, sir, some that were provided for Sir Rowland's entertainment are yet within call. [*A dance.*

Lady. As I am a person, I can hold out no longer. I have wasted my spirits so to-day already, that I am ready to sink under the fatigue, and I cannot but have some fears upon me yet that my son Fainall will pursue some desperate course.

Mira. Madam, disquiet not yourself on that account. To my knowledge his circumstances are such he must of force comply. For my part, I will contribute all that in me lies to a reunion. [*To MRS. FAINALL*] In the meantime, madam, let me before these witnesses restore to you this deed of trust. It may be a means, well managed, to make you live easily together.

From hence let those be warned, who mean to wed,
Lest mutual falsehood stain the bridal-bed;
For each deceiver to his cost may find
That marriage frauds too oft are paid in kind.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

EPILOGUE

Spoken by Mrs. Bracegirdle

*After our epilogue this crowd dismisses,
I'm thinking how this play'll be pulled to pieces.
But pray consider, ere you doom its fall,
How hard a thing 'twould be to please you all.
There are some critics so with spleen diseased
They scarcely come inclining to be pleased;
And sure he must have more than mortal skill,
Who pleases anyone against his will.
Then, all bad poets we are sure are foes,
And how their number's swelled the town well knows;
In shoals, I've marked 'em judging in the pit:
Though they're on no pretence for judgment fit,
But that they have been damned for want of wit.
Since when they, by their own offences taught,
Set up for spies on plays, and finding fault.
Others there are whose malice we'd prevent:
Such, who watch plays with scurrilous intent
To mark out who by characters are meant.
And though no perfect likeness they can trace,
Yet each pretends to know the copied face.
These, with false glosses feed their own ill-nature,
And turn to libel, what was meant a satire.
May such malicious fops this fortune find
To think themselves alone the fools designed;
If any are so arrogantly vain,
To think they singly can support a scene,
And furnish fool enough to entertain.
For well the learned and the judicious know*

*That satire scorns to stoop so meanly low,
As anyone abstracted fop to show.
For, as when painters form a matchless face,
They from each fair one catch some different grace,
And shining features in one portrait blend,
To which no single beauty must pretend;
So poets oft do in one piece expose
Whole belles assemblées of coquettes and beaux.*

INCOGNITA

INCOGNITA

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LOVE AND DUTY RECONCILED

AURELIAN was the only son to a principal gentleman of Florence. The indulgence of his father prompted, and his wealth enabled him, to bestow a generous education upon him whom he now began to look upon as the type of himself: an impression he had made in the gaiety and vigour of his youth, before the rust of age had debilitated and obscured the splendour of the original. He was sensible that he ought not to be sparing in the adornment of him, if he had resolution to beautify his own memory. Indeed Don Fabio (for so was the old gentleman called) has been observed to have fixed his eyes upon Aurelian when much company has been at table, and have wept through earnestness of intention, if nothing happened to divert the object; whether it were for regret at the recollection of his former self, or for the joy he conceived in being, as it were, revived in the person of his son, I never took upon me to enquire, but supposed it might be sometimes one and sometimes both together.

Aurelian, at the age of eighteen years, wanted nothing (but a beard) that the most accomplished cavalier in Florence could pretend to. He had been educated from twelve years old at Siena, where it seems his father kept a receiver, having a large income from the rents of several houses in that town. Don Fabio gave his servant orders that Aurelian should not be stinted in his expenses when he came up to years of discretion. By which means he was enabled, not only to keep company with, but also to confer

many obligations upon strangers of quality and gentlemen who travelled from other countries into Italy, of which Siena never wanted store, being a town most delightfully situate upon a noble hill, and very well suiting with strangers at first, by reason of the agreeableness and purity of the air. There also is the quaintness and delicacy of the Italian tongue most likely to be learned, there being many public professors of it in that place; and indeed the very vulgar of Siena do express themselves with an easiness and sweetness surprising and even grateful to their ears who understand not the language.

Here Aurelian contracted an acquaintance with persons of worth of several countries, but among the rest an intimacy with a gentleman of quality of Spain, and nephew to the Archbishop of Toledo, who had so wrought himself into the affections of Aurelian, through a conformity of temper, an equality in years, and something of resemblance in feature and proportion, that he looked upon him as his second self. Hippolito, on the other hand, was not ungrateful in return of friendship, but thought himself either alone or in ill-company if Aurelian were absent; but his uncle, having sent him to travel, under the conduct of a governor, and the two years which limited his stay at Siena being expired, he was put in mind of his departure.

His friend grew melancholy at the news, but considering that Hippolito had never seen Florence, he easily prevailed with him to make his first journey thither, whither he would accompany him, and perhaps prevail with his father to do the like throughout his travels.

They accordingly set out, but not being able easily to reach Florence the same night, they rested a league or two short, at a villa of the great duke's called Poggio Imperiale, where they were informed by some of his highness's servants that the nuptials of Donna Catharina (near kins-

woman to the great duke) and Don Ferdinand de Rovori were to be solemnized the next day, and that extraordinary preparations had been making for some time past to illustrate the solemnity with balls and masques, and other divertisements; that a tilting had been proclaimed, and to that purpose scaffolds erected around the spacious court before the church Di Santa Croce, where were usually seen all cavalcades and shows performed by assemblies of the young nobility; that all mechanics and tradesmen were forbidden to work or expose any goods to sale for the space of three days; during which time all persons should be entertained at the great duke's cost, and public provision was to be made for the setting forth and furnishing a multitude of tables, with entertainment for all comers and goers, and several houses appointed for that use in all streets.

This account alarmed the spirits of our young travellers, and they were overjoyed at the prospect of pleasures they foresaw. Aurelian could not contain the satisfaction he conceived in the welcome fortune had prepared for his dear Hippolito. In short, they both remembered so much of the pleasing relation had been made them that they forgot to sleep, and were up as soon as it was light, pounding at poor Signor Claudio's door (so was Hippolito's governor called) to rouse him, that no time might be lost till they were arrived at Florence, where they would furnish themselves with disguises and other accoutrements necessary for the prosecution of their design of sharing in the public merriment. The rather were they for going so early because Aurelian did not think fit to publish his being in town for a time, lest his father knowing of it might give some restraint to that loose they designed themselves.

Before sunrise they entered Florence at Porta Romana, attended only by two servants, the rest being left behind to

avoid notice; but alas! they needed not to have used half that caution, for early as it was the streets were crowded with all sorts of people passing to and fro, and every man employed in something relating to the diversions to come, so that no notice was taken of anybody. A marquess and his train might have passed by as unregarded as a single fachin* or cobbler. Not a window in the streets but echoed the tuning of a lute or thrumming of a guitar, for, by the way, the inhabitants of Florence are strangely addicted to the love of music, insomuch that scarce their children can go, before they can scratch some instrument or other. It was no unpleasing spectacle to our cavaliers (who, seeing they were not observed, resolved to make observations) to behold the diversity of figures and postures of many of these musicians. Here you should have an affected valet who mimicked the behaviour of his master, leaning carelessly against the window, with his head on one side, in a languishing posture, whining in a low, mournful voice, some dismal complaint; while from his sympathising theorbo† issued a bass no less doleful to the hearers. In opposition to him was set up perhaps a cobbler, with the wretched skeleton of a guitar, battered and waxed together by his own industry, and who with three strings out of tune and his own tearing, hoarse voice, would rack attention from the neighbourhood to the great affliction of many more moderate practitioners, who, no doubt, were full as desirous to be heard. By this time Aurelian's servant had taken a lodging and was returned to give his master an account of it. The cavaliers grown weary of that ridiculous entertainment, which was diverting at first sight, retired whither the lackey conducted them, who, according to their directions, had sought out one of the most obscure

* Porter

† A large lute.

streets in the city. All that day, to the evening, was spent in sending from one broker's shop to another to furnish them with habits, since they had not time to make any new.

There was, it happened, but one to be got rich enough to please our young gentlemen, so many were taken up upon this occasion. While they were in dispute and complimenting one another, Aurelian protesting that Hippolito should wear it, and he, on tother hand, forswearing it as bitterly, a servant of Hippolito's came up and ended the controversy, telling them that he had met below with the *valet de chambre* of a gentleman who was one of the greatest gallants about the town, but was at this time in such a condition he could not possibly be at the entertainment; whereupon the valet had designed to dress himself up in his master's apparel, and try his talent at Court; which he, hearing, told him he would inform him how he might bestow the habit for some time much more to his profit if not to his pleasure, so acquainted him with the occasion his master had for it. Hippolito sent for the fellow up, who was not so fond of his design as not to be bought off it, but upon having his own demand granted for the use of it, brought it; it was very rich, and upon trial as fit for Hippolito as if it had been made for him. The ceremony was performed in the morning, in the great dome, with all magnificence corresponding to the wealth of the great duke, and the esteem he had for the noble pair. The next morning was to be a tilting, and the same night a masking ball at Court. To omit the description of the universal joy, that had diffused itself through all the conduits of wine, which conveyed it in large measures to the people, and only relate those effects of it which concern our present adventurers, you must know that about the fall of the evening, and at that time when the equilibrium of day and night for some time holds the air in a gloomy

suspense between an unwillingness to leave the light and a natural impulse into the dominion of darkness—about this time our heroes, shall I say, sallied or slunk out of their lodgings, and steered toward the great palace, whither, before they were arrived, such a prodigious number of torches were on fire that the day, by help of these auxiliary forces, seemed to continue its dominion, the owls and bats apprehending their mistake in counting the hours, retired again to a convenient darkness, for Madam Night was no more to be seen than she was to be heard, and the chemists were of opinion that her fuliginous damps rarefied by the abundance of flame were evaporated.

Now the reader I suppose to be upon thorns at this and the like impertinent digressions, but let him alone and he'll come to himself; at which time I think fit to acquaint him that when I digress, I am at that time writing to please myself, when I continue the thread of the story, I write to please him; supposing him a reasonable man, I conclude him satisfied to allow me this liberty, and so I proceed.

If our cavaliers were dazzled at the splendour they beheld without doors, what surprise, think you, must they be in when entering the palace they found even the lights there to be but so many foils to the bright eyes that flashed upon them at every turn.

A more glorious troop no occasion ever assembled. All the fair of Florence, with the most accomplished cavaliers, were present, and however nature had been partial in bestowing on some better faces than others, art was alike indulgent to all, and industriously supplied those defects she had left, giving some addition also to her greatest excellences. Everybody appeared well shaped, as it is to be supposed none who were conscious to themselves of any visible deformity would presume to come hither. Their apparel was equally glorious, though each differing in

fancy. In short, our strangers were so well bred as to conclude from these apparent perfections that there was not a mask which did not at least hide the face of a cherubim. Perhaps the ladies were not behindhand in return of a favourable opinion of them, for they were both well dressed, and had something inexpressibly pleasing in their air and mien, different from other people, and indeed differing from one another. They fancied that while they stood together they were more particularly taken notice of than any in the room, and being unwilling to be taken for strangers, which they thought they were, by reason of some whispering they observed near them, they agreed upon an hour of meeting after the company should be broken up, and so separately mingled with the thickest of the assembly. Aurelian had fixed his eye upon a lady whom he had observed to have been a considerable time in close whisper with another woman; he expected with great impatience the result of that private conference that he might have an opportunity of engaging the lady whose person was so agreeable to him. At last he perceived they were broken off, and the other lady seemed to have taken her leave. He had taken no small pains in the meantime to put himself in a posture to accost the lady, which, no doubt, he had happily performed had he not been interrupted; but scarce had he acquitted himself of a preliminary bow (and which, I have heard him say, was the lowest that ever he made) and had just opened his lips to deliver himself of a small compliment, which, nevertheless, he was very big with, when he unluckily miscarried by the interposal of the same lady whose departure, not long before, he had so zealously prayed for; but as Providence would have it, there was only some very small matter forgot, which was recovered in a short whisper. The coast being again cleared he took heart and bore up, and, striking sail, repeated his ceremony

to the lady, who having obligingly returned it, he accosted her in these or the like words:

“If I do not usurp a privilege reserved for someone more happy in your acquaintance, may I presume, madam, to entreat (for a while) the favour of your conversation, at least till the arrival of whom you expect, provided you are not tired of me before; for then upon the least intimation of uneasiness I will not fail of doing myself the violence to withdraw for your release.”

The lady made him answer she did not expect anybody; by which he might imagine her conversation not of value to be bespoke, and to afford it him were but further to convince him to her own cost.

He replied: “She had already said enough to convince him of something he heartily wished might not be to his cost in the end.”

She pretended not to understand him; but told him: “If he already found himself grieved with her conversation he would have sufficient reason to repent the rashness of his first demand before they had ended: for that now she intended to hold discourse with him on purpose to punish his unadvisedness in presuming upon a person whose dress and mien might not (maybe) be disagreeable to have wit.”

“I must,” replied Aurelian, “confess myself guilty of a presumption, and willingly submit to the punishment you intend; and though it be an aggravation of a crime to persevere in its justification, yet I cannot help defending an opinion, in which now I am more confirmed, that probable conjectures may be made of the ingenious disposition of the mind from the fancy and choice of apparel.”

“The humour I grant ye,” said the lady, “or constitution of the person whether melancholic or brisk; but I should hardly pass my censure upon so slight

an indication of wit, for there is your brisk fool as well as your brisk man of sense, and so of the melancholic. I confess 'tis possible a fool may reveal himself by his dress, in wearing something extravagantly singular and ridiculous, or in preposterous suiting of colours; but a decency of habit (which is all that men of best sense pretend to) may be acquired by custom and example, without putting the person to a superfluous expense of wit for the contrivance; and though there should be occasion for it, few are so unfortunate in their relations and acquaintance not to have some friend capable of giving them advice, if they are not too ignorantly conceited to ask it."

Aurelian was so pleased with the easiness and smartness of her expostulation that he forgot to make a reply, when she seemed to expect it; but being a woman of a quick apprehension, and justly sensible of her own perfections, she soon perceived he did not grudge his attention. However she had a mind to put it upon him to turn the discourse, so went on upon the same subject.

"Signor," said she, "I have been looking round me, and by your maxim I cannot discover one fool in the company, for they are all well dressed."

This was spoken with an air of raillery that awakened the cavalier, who immediately made answer: "'Tis true, madam, we see there may be as much variety of good fancies as of faces, yet there may be many of both kinds borrowed and adulterated if inquired into; and as you were pleased to observe, the invention may be foreign to the person who puts it in practice; and as good an opinion as I have of an agreeable dress, I should be loath to answer for the wit of all about us."

"I believe you," says the lady, "and hope you are convinced of your error, since you must allow it impossible to

tell who of all this assembly did or did not make choice of their own apparel."

"Not all," said Aurelian, "there is an ungainness in some which betrays them. Look ye there," says he, pointing to a lady who stood playing with the tassels of her girdle, "I dare answer for that lady, though she be very well dressed, 'tis more than she knows."

His fair unknown could not forbear laughing at his particular distinction, and freely told him he had indeed lit upon one who knew as little as anybody in the room, herself excepted.

"Ah, madam!" replied Aurelian, "you know everything in the world but your own perfections, and you only know not those, because 'tis the top of perfection not to know them."

"How?" replied the lady, "I thought it had been the extremity of knowledge to know oneself."

Aurelian had a little overstrained himself in that compliment, and I am of opinion would have been puzzled to have brought himself off readily; but by good fortune the music came into the room and gave him an opportunity to seem to decline an answer, because the company prepared to dance. He only told her he was too mean a con-quest for her wit, who was already a slave to the charms of her person.

She thanked him for his compliment, and briskly told him she ought to have made him a return in praise of his wit; but she hoped he was a man more happy than to be dissatisfied with any of his own endowments: and if it were so that he had not a just opinion of himself, she knew herself incapable of saying anything to beget one.

Aurelian did not know well what to make of this last reply, for he always abhorred anything that was conceited, with which this seemed to reproach him. But however

modest he had been heretofore in his own thoughts, yet never was he so distrustful of his good behaviour as now, being rallied so by a person whom he took to be of judgment. Yet he resolved to take no notice, but with an air unconcerned and full of good humour entreated her to dance with him. She promised him to dance with nobody else, nor, I believe, had she inclination; for notwithstanding her tartness, she was upon equal terms with him as to the liking of each other's person and humour, and only gave those little hints to try his temper; there being certainly no greater sign of folly and ill-breeding than to grow serious and concerned at anything spoken in raillery. For his part, he was strangely and insensibly fallen in love with her shape, wit and air, which, together with a white hand he had seen (perhaps not accidentally), were enough to have subdued a more stubborn heart than ever he was master of; and for her face, which he had not seen, he bestowed upon her the best his imagination could furnish him with. I should by right now describe her dress, which was extremely agreeable and rich, but 'tis possible I might err in some material pin or other, in the sticking of which maybe the whole grace of the drapery depended. Well, they danced several times together, and no less to the satisfaction of the whole company than of themselves, for at the end of each dance some public note of applause or other was given to the graceful couple.

Aurelian was amazed that among all that danced or stood in view he could not see Hippolito; but concluding that he had met with some pleasing conversation, and was withdrawn to some retired part of the room, he forbore his search till the mirth of that night should be over, and the company ready to break up, where we will leave him for a while to see what became of his adventurous friend.

Hippolito, a little after he had parted with Aurelian, was

got among a knot of ladies and cavaliers, who were looking upon a large gold cup set with jewels, in which his royal highness had drank to the prosperity of the new-married couple at dinner, and which afterward he presented to his cousin, Donna Catharina. He among the rest was very intent admiring the richness, workmanship and beauty of the cup, when a lady came behind him, and pulling him by the elbow made a sign she would speak with him. Hippolito, who knew himself an utter stranger to Florence and everybody in it, immediately guessed she had mistaken him for her acquaintance, as indeed it happened; however, he resolved not to discover himself till he should be assured of it. Having followed her into a set-window remote from the company she addressed herself to him in this manner: "Signor Don Lorenzo," said she, "I am overjoyed to see you are so speedily recovered of your wounds, which by report were much more dangerous than to have suffered your coming abroad so soon; but I must accuse you of great indiscretion in appearing in a habit which so many must needs remember you to have worn upon the like occasion not long ago: I mean at the marriage of Don Cynthio with your sister Atalanta. I do assure you, you were known by it both to Juliana and myself, who was so far concerned for you as to desire me to tell you that her brother, Don Fabritio (who saw you when you came in with another gentleman), had eyed you very narrowly, and is since gone out of the room, she knows not upon what design. However she would have you, for your own sake, be advised and circumspect when you depart this place, lest you should be set upon unawares. You know the hatred Don Fabritio has borne you ever since you had the fortune to kill his kinsman in a duel." Here she paused, as if expecting his reply; but Hippolito was so confounded, that he stood mute, and contemplating the hazard he had ignorantly

brought himself into, forgot his design of informing the lady of her mistake. She, finding he made her no answer, went on. "I perceive," continued she, "you are in some surprise at what I have related, and maybe are doubtful of the truth; but I thought you had been better acquainted with your cousin Leonora's voice than to have forgot it so soon. Yet in complaisance to your ill memory I will put you past doubt by showing you my face." With that she pulled off her mask, and discovered to Hippolito, now more amazed than ever, the most angelic face that he had ever beheld.

He was just about to have made her some answer, when, clapping on her mask again without giving him time, she happily, for him, pursued her discourse. (For 'tis odds but he had made some discovery of himself in the surprise he was in.)

Having taken him familiarly by the hand, now she had made herself known to him: "Cousin Lorenzo," added she, "you may perhaps have taken it unkindly that, during the time of your indisposition by reason of your wounds, I have not been to visit you. I do assure you it was not for want of any inclination I had both to see and serve you to my power. But you are well acquainted with the severity of my father, whom you know how lately you have disoblged. I am mighty glad that I have met with you here, where I have had an opportunity to tell you what so much concerns your safety, which I am afraid you will not find in Florence, considering the great power Don Fabritio and his father, the Marquess of Viterbo, have in this city. I have another thing to inform you of, that whereas Don Fabio had interested himself in your cause, in opposition to the Marquess of Viterbo, by reason of the long animosity between them, all hopes of his countenance and assistance are defeated. For there has been a proposal of reconcilia-

tion made to both houses, and it is said it will be confirmed (as most such ancient quarrels are at last) by the marriage of Juliana, the Marquess's daughter, with Aurelian, son to Don Fabio. To which effect the old gentleman sent tother day to Siena, where Aurelian has been educated, to hasten his coming to town; but the messenger returning this morning brought word that the same day he arrived at Siena, Aurelian had set out for Florence in company with a young Spanish nobleman, his intimate friend; so it is believed they are both in town, and not unlikely in this room in masquerade."

Hippolito could not forbear smiling to himself at these last words. For ever since the naming of Don Fabio he had been very attentive; but before his thoughts were wholly taken up with the beauty of the face he had seen, and from the time she had taken him by the hand a successive warmth and chillness had played about his heart, and surprised him with an unusual transport. He was in a hundred minds whether he should make her sensible of her error or no; but considering he could expect no farther conference with her after he should discover himself, and that as yet he knew not of her place of abode, he resolved to humour the mistake a little further. Having her still by the hand, which he squeezed somewhat more eagerly than is usual for cousins to do, in a low and undistinguishable voice he let her know how much he held himself obliged to her, and avoiding as many words as handsomely he could at the same time entreated her to give him her advice toward the management of himself in this affair. Leonora, who never from the beginning had entertained the least scruple of mistrust, imagined he spoke faintly as not being yet perfectly recovered in his strength; and withal considering that the heat of the room, by reason of the crowd, might be uneasy to a person in his condition, she kindly told him

that if he were as inclinable to dispense with the remainder of that night's diversion as she was, and had no other engagement upon him, by her consent they should both steal out of the assembly and go to her house, where they might with more freedom discourse about a business of that importance, and where he might take something to refresh himself if he were (as she conceived him to be) indisposed with his long standing. Judge you whether the proposal was acceptable to Hippolito or no! He had been ruminating with himself how to bring something like this about, and had almost despaired of it, when of a sudden he found the success of his design had prevented his own endeavours. He told his cousin in the same key as before that he was unwilling to be the occasion of her divorce from so much good company; but for his own part he was afraid he had presumed too much upon his recovery in coming abroad so soon, and that he found himself so unwell he feared he should be quickly forced to retire. Leonora stayed not to make him any other reply, only tipped him upon the arm, and bid him follow her at a convenient distance to avoid observation.

Whoever had seen the joy that was in Hippolito's countenance, and the sprightliness with which he followed his beautiful conductress, would scarce have taken him for a person grieved with uncured wounds. She led him down a back pair of stairs, into one of the palace gardens which had a door opening into the Piazza not far from where Don Mario, her father, lived. They had little discourse by the way, which gave Hippolito time to consider of the best way of discovering himself. A thousand things came into his head in a minute, yet nothing that pleased him, and after so many contrivances as he had formed for the discovery of himself, he found it more rational for him not to reveal himself at all that night, since he could not fore-

see what effect the surprise would have she must needs be in at the appearance of a stranger, whom she had never seen before, yet whom she had treated so familiarly. He knew women were apt to shriek or swoon upon such occasions, and should she happen to do either he might be at a loss how to bring himself off. He thought he might easily pretend to be indisposed somewhat more than ordinary, and so make an excuse to go to his own lodging. It came into his head, too, that under pretence of giving her an account of his health he might enquire of her the means how a letter might be conveyed to her the next morning, wherein he might inform her gently of her mistake, and insinuate something of that passion he had conceived, which he was sure he could not have opportunity to speak of if he bluntly revealed himself. He had just resolved upon this method as they were come to the great gates of the court, when Leonora stopping to let him go in before her, he of a sudden fetched his breath violently, as if some stitch or twinging smart had just than assaulted him. She enquired the matter of him, and advised him to make haste into the house that he might sit down and rest him. He told her he found himself so ill that he judged it more convenient for him to go home while he was in a condition to move, for he feared if he should once settle himself to rest he might not be able to stir. She was much troubled, and would have had a chair made ready and servants to carry him home; but he made answer he would not have any of her father's servants know of his being abroad, and that just now he had an interval of ease, which he hoped would continue till he made a shift to reach his own lodgings. Yet if she pleased to inform him how he might give an account of himself the next morning, in a line or two, he would not fail to give her the thanks due to her great kindness; and withal would let her know something which

would not a little surprise her, though now he had not time to acquaint her with it. She showed him a little window at the corner of the house, where one should wait to receive his letter, and was just taking her leave of him, when seeing him search hastily in his pocket she asked him if he missed anything. He told her he thought a wound which was not thoroughly healed bled a little, and that he had lost his handkerchief. His design took, for she immediately gave him hers, which indeed accordingly he applied to the only wound he was then grieved with, which though it went quite through his heart, yet, thank God, was not mortal. He was not a little rejoiced at his good fortune in getting so early a favour from his mistress, and notwithstanding the violence he did himself to personate a sick man, he could not forbear giving some symptoms of an extraordinary content, and telling her that he did not doubt to receive a considerable proportion of ease from the application of what had so often kissed her fair hand. Leonora, who did not suspect the compliment, told him she should be heartily glad if that or anything in her power might contribute to his recovery; and wishing him well home went into her house, as much troubled for her cousin as he was joyful for his mistress.

Hippolito, as soon as she was gone in, began to make his remarks about the house, walking round the great court, viewing the gardens and all the passages leading to that side of the piazza. Having sufficiently informed himself, with a heart full of love, and a head full of stratagem, he walked toward his lodging, impatient till the arrival of Aurelian, that he might give himself vent. In which interim, let me take the liberty to digress a little, and tell the reader something which I do not doubt he has apprehended himself long ago, if he be not the dumbest reader in the world; yet only for order's sake let me tell him, I say, that a young

gentleman (cousin to the aforesaid Don Fabritio) happened one night to have some words at a gaming house with one Lorenzo, which created a quarrel of fatal consequence to the former, who was killed upon the spot, and likely to be so to the latter, who was very desperately wounded.

Fabritio, being much concerned for his kinsman, vowed revenge (according to the ancient and laudable custom of Italy) upon Lorenzo if he survived, or in case of his death (if it should happen to anticipate that much more swingeing death which he had in store for him) upon his next of kin, and so to descend lineally like an English estate to all the heir males of his family. This same Fabritio had indeed (as Leonora told Hippolito) taken particular notice of him from his first entrance into the room, and was so far doubtful as to go out immediately himself and make enquiry concerning Lorenzo, but was quickly informed of the greatness of his error in believing a man to be abroad, who was so ill of his wounds that they now despaired of his recovery; and thereupon returned to the ball very well satisfied, but not before Leonora and Hippolito were departed.

So, reader, having now discharged my conscience of a small discovery which I thought myself obliged to make to thee, I proceed to tell thee that our friend Aurelian had by this time danced himself into a net which he neither could, nor, which is worse, desired to untangle.

His soul was charmed to the movement of her body. An air so graceful, so sweet, so easy and so great, he had never seen. She had something of majesty in her, which appeared to be born with her; and though it struck an awe into the beholders, yet was it sweetened with a familiarity of behaviour which rendered it agreeable to everybody. The grandeur of her mien was not stiff, but unstudied and unforced, mixed with a simplicity, free, yet not loose nor affected. If the former seemed to condescend, the latter seemed to

aspire, and both to unite in the centre of perfection. Every turn she gave in dancing snatched Aurelian into a rapture, and he had like to have been out two or three times with following his eyes, which she led about as slaves to her heels.

As soon as they had done dancing, he began to complain of his want of breath and lungs to speak sufficiently in her commendation. She smilingly told him he did ill to dance so much then. Yet in consideration of the pains he had taken more than ordinary upon her account, she would bate him a great deal of compliment, but with this proviso, that he was to discover to her who he was. Aurelian was unwilling for the present to own himself to be really the man he was, when a sudden thought came into his head to take upon him the name and character of Hippolito, who he was sure was not known in Florence. He thereupon, after a little pause, pretended to recall himself in this manner : “ Madam, it is no small demonstration of the entire resignation which I have made of my heart to your chains, since the secrets of it are no longer in my power. I confess I only took Florence in my way, not designing any longer residence than should be requisite to inform the curiosity of a traveller of the rarities of the place. Whether happiness or misery will be the consequence of that curiosity I am yet in fear, and submit to your determination; but sure I am not to depart Florence till you have made me the most miserable man in it, and refuse me the fatal kindness of dying at your feet. I am by birth a Spaniard, of the city of Toledo; my name Hippolito di Saviolina; I was yesterday a man free, as Nature made the first; to-day I am fallen into a captivity which must continue with my life, and which it is in your power to make much dearer to me. Thus, in obedience to your commands, and contrary to my resolution of remaining

unknown in this place, I have informed you, madam, what I am; what I shall be, I desire to know from you; at least I hope the free discovery I have made of myself will encourage you to trust me with the knowledge of your person."

Here a low bow and a deep sigh put an end to his discourse, and signified his expectation of her reply, which was to this purposes. (But I had forgot to tell you that Aurelian kept off his mask from the time that he told her he was of Spain till the period of his relation.) : "Had I thought," said she, "that my curiosity would have brought me in debt, I should certainly have forborne it, or at least have agreed with you beforehand about the rate of your discovery. Then I had not brought myself to the inconveniency of being censured either of too much easiness or reservedness; but to avoid, as much as I can, the extremity of either I am resolved but to discover myself in part, and will endeavour to give you as little occasion as I can either to boast of, or ridicule, the behaviour of the women of Florence in your travels."

Aurelian interrupted her, and swore very solemnly (and the more heartily, I believe, because he then indeed spoke truth) that he would make Florence the place of his abode, whatever concerns he had elsewhere. She advised him to be cautious how he swore to his expressions of gallantry, and further told him she now hoped she should make him a return to all the fine things he had said, since she gave him his choice whether he would know whom she was, or see her face.

Aurelian, who was really in love, and in whom consideration would have been a crime, greedily embraced the latter, since she assured him at that time he should not know both. Well, what followed? Why, she pulled off her mask, and appeared to him at once in the glory of beauty. But who can tell the astonishment Aurelian felt? He was for a time

senseless. Admiration had suppressed his speech, and his eyes were entangled in light. In short, to be made sensible of his condition, we must conceive some idea of what he beheld, which is not to be imagined till seen, nor then to be expressed. Now see the impertinence and conceitedness of an author, who will have a fling at a description, which he has prefaced with an impossibility! One might have seen something in her composition resembling the formation of Epicurus's world, as if every atom of beauty had concurred to unite an excellency. Had that curious painter lived in her days, he might have avoided his painful search, when he collected from the choicest pieces the most choice features, and by a due disposition and judicious symmetry of those exquisite parts, made one whole and perfect Venus. Nature seemed here to have played the plagiarist, and to have moulded into substance the most refined thoughts of inspired poets. Her eyes diffused rays comfortable as warmth, and piercing as the light; they would have worked a passage through the straightest pores, and with a delicious heat have played about the most obdurate frozen heart, until 'twere melted down to love. Such majesty and affability were in her looks, so alluring, yet commanding, was her presence, that it mingled awe with love, kindling a flame which trembled to aspire. She had danced much, which, together with her being close masked, gave her a tincture of carnation more than ordinary. But Aurelian (from whom I had every tittle of her description) fancied he saw a little nest of cupids break from the tresses of her hair, and every one officiously betake himself to his task. Some fanned with their downy wings her glowing cheeks, while others brushed the balmy dew from off her face, leaving alone a heavenly moisture blubbing* on her lips, on which they drank and revelled

* Protruding.

for their pains. Nay, so particular were their allotments in her service that Aurelian was very positive a young Cupid, who was but just pen-feathered, employed his naked quills to pick her teeth. And a thousand other things his transport represented to him, which none but lovers who have experience of such visions will believe.

As soon as he awakened and found his speech come to him, he employed it to this effect:

“ ’Tis enough that I have seen a divinity. Nothing but mercy can inhabit these perfections. Their utmost rigour brings a death preferable to any life, but what they give. Use me, madam, as you please, for by your fair self, I cannot think a bliss beyond what now I feel. You wound with pleasure, and if you kill it must be with transport. Ah! Yet methinks to live—— Oh Heaven! to have life pronounced by those blessed lips. Did they not inspire where they command, it were an immediate death of joy.”

Aurelian was growing a little too loud with his admiration had she not just then interrupted him by clapping on her mask, and telling him they should be observed, if he proceeded in his extravagance; and withal that his passion was too sudden to be real, and too violent to be lasting. He replied, indeed it might not be very lasting (with a submissive mournful voice), but it would continue during his life. That it was sudden, he denied, for she had raised it by degrees from his first sight of her, by a continued discovery of charms in her mien and conversation, till she thought fit to set fire to the train she had laid by the lighting of her face; and then he could not help it if he were blown up.

He begged her to believe the sincerity of his passion, at least to enjoin him something which might tend to the convincing of her incredulity. She said, she should find a time to make some trials of him; but for the first she

charged him not to follow or observe her after the dissolution of the assembly. He promised to obey, and entreated her to tell him but her name, that he might have recourse to that in his affliction for her absence, if he were able to survive it. She desired him to live by all means, and if he must have a name to play with to call her Incognita, till he were better informed.

The company breaking up, she took her leave, and at his earnest entreaty gave him a short vision of her face, which, then dressed in an obliging smile, caused another fit of transport, which lasted till she was gone out of sight. Aurelian gathered up his spirits, and walked slowly towards his lodging, never remembering that he had lost Hippolito, till upon turning the corner of a street he heard a noise of fighting; and coming near saw a man make a vigorous defence against two, who pressed violently upon him. He then thought of Hippolito, and fancying he saw the glimmering of diamond buttons, such as Hippolito had upon the sleeves of his habit, immediately drew to his assistance, and with that eagerness and resolution that the assailants, finding their unmanly odds defeated, took to their heels. The person rescued by the generous help of Aurelian came toward him; but as he would have stooped to have saluted him dropped fainting at his feet. Aurelian, now he was so near him, perceived plainly Hippolito's habit, and stepped hastily to take him up, just as some of the guards (who were going the rounds, apprehensive of such disorders in an universal merriment) came up to him with lights, and had taken prisoners the two men, whom they met with their swords drawn; when looking in the face of the wounded man he found it was not Hippolito, but his governor Claudio in the habit he had worn at the ball. He was extremely surprised, as were the prisoners, who confessed their design to have been upon Lorenzo,

grounding their mistake upon the habit which was known to have been his. They were two men who formerly had been servants to him whom Lorenzo had unfortunately slain.

They made a shift to bring Claudio to himself, and part of the guard carrying off the prisoners, whom Aurelian desired they would secure, the rest accompanied him, bearing Claudio in their arms to his lodging. He had not patience to forbear asking for Hippolito by the way, whom Claudio assured him he had left safe in his chamber above two hours since. That his coming home so long before the divertisements were ended, and undressing himself, had given him the unhappy curiosity to put on his habit and go to the palace, in his return from whence he was set upon in the manner he found him, which if he recovered he must own his life indebted to his timely assistance.

Being come to the house they carried him to his bed, and having sent for surgeons Aurelian rewarded and dismissed the guard. He stayed the dressing of Claudio's wounds, which were many, though they hoped none mortal, and leaving him to his rest went to give Hippolito an account of what had happened, whom he found with a table before him, leaning upon both his elbows, his face covered with his hands, and so motionless that Aurelian concluded he was asleep. Seeing several papers lie before him, half written and blotted out again, he thought to steal softly to the table and discover what he had been employed about. Just as he reached forth his hand to take up one of the papers Hippolito started up so on the sudden as surprised Aurelian and made him leap back. Hippolito, on the other hand, not supposing that anybody had been near him, was so disordered with the appearance of a man at his elbow (whom his amazement did not permit him to distinguish), that he leaped hastily to his sword, and in turning him

about overthrew the stand and candles. Here were they both left in the dark, Hippolito groping about with his sword, and thrusting at every chair that he felt oppose him. Aurelian was scarce come to himself, when thinking to step back toward the door that he might inform his friend of his mistake, without exposing himself to his blind fury, Hippolito heard him stir, and made a full thrust with such violence that the hilt of the sword meeting with Aurelian's breast beat him down, and Hippolito a-top of him, as a servant, alarmed with the noise, came into the chamber with a light. The fellow trembled, and thought they were both dead, till Hippolito, raising himself to see whom he had got under him, swooned away upon the discovery of his friend. But such was the extraordinary care of Providence in directing the sword that it only passed under his arm, giving no wound to Aurelian but a little bruise between his shoulder and breast with the hilt. He got up, scarce recovered of his fright, and by the help of the servant laid Hippolito upon the bed; who when he was come to himself could hardly be persuaded that his friend was before him and alive, till he showed him his breast, where was nothing of a wound. Hippolito begged his pardon a thousand times, and cursed himself as often, who was so near to committing the most execrable act of amicide.*

They dismissed the fellow, and with many embraces congratulated their fortunate delivery from the mischief which came so near them, each blaming himself as the occasion: Aurelian accusing his own unadvisedness in stealing upon Hippolito; Hippolito blaming his own temerity and weakness in being so easily frightened to disorder, and last of all his blindness in not knowing his dearest friend. But there he gave a sigh, and passionately taking Aurelian by the hand cried, "Ah, my friend, love is indeed blind, when

* Friend-murder (an invention of Congreve's).

it would not suffer me to see you." There arose another sigh ; a sympathy seized Aurelian immediately (for, by the way, sighing is as catching among lovers as yawning among the vulgar). Beside, hearing the name of love made him fetch such a sigh that Hippolito's were but fly-blows in comparison. That was answered with all the might Hippolito had; Aurelian plied him close till they were both out of breath.

Thus not a word passed, though each wondered why the tother sighed; at last concluded it to be only complaisance to one another.

Aurelian broke the silence by telling him the misfortune of his governor. Hippolito rejoiced as at the luckiest accident which could have befallen him. Aurelian wondered at his unseasonable mirth, and demanded the cause of it; he answered it would necessitate his longer stay in Florence, and for ought he knew be the means of bringing a happy period to his amour.

His friend thought him to be little better than a madman, when he perceived him of a sudden snatch out of his bosom a handkerchief, which having kissed with a great deal of ardour, he took Aurelian by the hand, and smiling at the surprise he saw him in:

"Your Florentine Cupid is certainly," said he, "the most expert in the world. I have since I saw you beheld the most beautiful of women. I am fallen desperately in love with her, and those papers which you see so blotted and scattered are but so many essays which I have made to the declaration of my passion. And this handkerchief which I so zealously caress is the inestimable token which I have to make myself known to her. Oh, Leonora," continued he, "how hast thou stamped thine image on my soul! How much dearer am I to myself, since I have had thy heavenly form in keeping! Now, my Aurelian, I am worthy thee;

my exalted love has dignified me, and raised me far above thy poor former despicable Hippolito."

Aurelian, seeing the rapture he was in, thought it in vain to expect a settled relation of the adventure, so was reaching to the table for some of the papers, but Hippolito told him if he would have a little patience he would acquaint him with the whole matter; and thereupon told him word for word how he was mistaken for Lorenzo, and his management of himself. Aurelian commended his prudence in not discovering himself; and told him if he could spare so much time from the contemplation of his mistress, he would inform him of an adventure, though not so accidental, yet of as great concern to his own future happiness. So related all that had happened to him with his beautiful Incognita.

Having ended the story they began to consider of the means they were to use toward a review of their mistresses. Aurelian was confounded at the difficulty he conceived on his part. He understood from Hippolito's adventure that his father knew of his being in town, whom he must unavoidably disoblige if he yet concealed himself, and disobey if he came into his sight; for he had already entertained an aversion for Juliana, in apprehension of her being imposed on him. His Incognita was rooted in his heart, yet could he not comfort himself with any hopes when he should see her. He knew not where she lived, and she had made him no promise of a second conference. Then did he repent his inconsiderate choice in preferring the momentary vision of her face to a certain intelligence of her person. Every thought that succeeded distracted him, and all the hopes he could presume upon were within compass of the two days' merriment yet to come, for which space he hoped he might excuse his remaining concealed to his father.

Hippolito, on the other side (though Aurelian thought him in a much better way), was no less afflicted for himself. The difficulties which he saw in his friend's circumstances put him upon finding out a great many more in his own than really there were. But what terrified him most of all was his being an utter stranger to Leonora; she had not the least knowledge of him but through mistake; and consequently could form no idea of him to his advantage. He looked upon it as an unlucky thought in Aurelian to take upon him his name, since possibly the two ladies were acquainted, and should they communicate to each other their adventures, they might both reasonably suffer in their opinions, and be thought guilty of falsehood, since it would appear to them as one person pretending to be two. Aurelian told him there was but one remedy for that, which was for Hippolito, in the same manner that he had done, to make use of his name, when he writ to Leonora, and use what arguments he could to persuade her to secrecy, lest his father should know of the reason which kept him concealed in town. And it was likely, though perhaps she might not immediately entertain his passion, yet she would out of generosity conceal what was hidden only for her sake.

Well, this was concluded on, after a great many other reasons used on either side, in favour of the contrivance; they at last argued themselves into a belief that fortune had befriended them with a better plot than their regular thinking could have contrived. So soon had they convinced themselves in what they were willing to believe.

Aurelian laid himself down to rest, that is, upon the bed, for he was a better lover than to pretend to sleep that night, while Hippolito set himself again to frame his letter designed for Leonora. He wrote several, at last pitched upon

one, and very probably the worst, as you may guess when you read it in its proper place.

It was break of day when the servant, who had been employed all the foregoing day in procuring accoutrements for the two cavaliers to appear in at the tilting, came into the room, and told them all the young gentlemen in the town were trying their equipage, and preparing to be early in the lists. They made themselves ready with all expedition at the alarm, and Hippolito, having made a visit to his governor, despatched a messenger with the letter and directions to Leonora. At the signal agreed upon the casement was opened and a string let down, to which the bearer having fastened the letter saw it drawn up, and returned. It were a vain attempt to describe Leonora's surprise when she read the superscription. "The unfortunate Aurelian to the beautiful Leonora." After she was a little recovered from her amaze, she recollected to herself all the passages between her and her supposed cousin, and immediately concluded him to be Aurelian. Then several little circumstances which she thought might have been sufficient to have convinced her represented themselves to her; and she was in a strange uneasiness to think of her free carriage to a stranger.

She was once in a mind to have burned the letter, or to have stayed for an opportunity to send it again. But she was a woman, and her curiosity opposed itself to all thoughts of that nature. At length with a firm resolution she opened it, and found word for word what is underwritten.

MADAM,

If your fair eyes, upon the breaking up of this, meet with somewhat too quick a surprise, make thence, I beseech you, some reflection upon the condition I must needs have been in at the sudden appearance of that sun of beauty,

which at once shone so full upon my soul. I could not immediately disengage myself from that maze of charms to let you know how unworthy a captive your eyes had made through mistake. Sure, madam, you cannot but remember my disorder, of which your innocent (innocent, though perhaps to me fatal) error made a charitable (but wide) construction. Your tongue pursued the victory of your eyes, and you did not give me time to rally my poor disordered senses, so as to make a tolerable retreat. Pardon, madam, the continuation of the deceit, and call it not so, that I appeared to be other than myself, for Heaven knows I was not then myself, nor am I now my own. You told me something that concerned me nearly, as to a marriage my father designed me, and much more nearly in being told by you. For Heaven's sake, disclose not to anybody your knowledge of me, that I may not be forced to an immediate act of disobedience; for if my future services and inviolate love cannot recommend me to your favour, I shall find more comfort in the cold embraces of a grave, than in the arms of the never so much admired (but by me dreaded) Juliana. Think, madam, of those severe circumstances I lie under, and withal, I beg you, think it is in your power, and only in your power, to make them happy as my wishes, or much more miserable than I am able to imagine. That dear, inestimable (though undesigned) favour, which I received from you, shall this day distinguish me from the crowd of your admirers; that which I really applied to my inward bleeding wound, the welcome wound which you have made, and which, unless from you, does wish no cure. Then pardon and have pity on, O adored Leonora, him who is yours by creation as he is Heaven's, though never so unworthy. Have pity on

Your

AURELIAN.

She read the letter over and over, then flung it by, then read it again; the novelty of the adventure made her repeat her curiosity, and take more than ordinary pains to understand it. At last her familiarity with the expressions grew to an intimacy, and what she at first permitted she now began to like. She thought there was something in it a little more serious than to be barely gallantry. She wondered at her own blindness, and fancied she could remember something of a more becoming air in the stranger than was usual to Lorenzo. This thought was parent to another of the same kind, till a long chain successively had birth, and everyone somewhat more than other in favour of the supposed Aurelian. She reflected upon his discretion in deferring the discovery of himself, till a little time had, as it were, weaned her from her persuasion, and by removing her farther from her mistake, had prepared her for a full and determinate convincement. She thought his behaviour in personating a sick man so readily, upon the first hint, was not amiss, and smiled to think of his excuse to procure her handkerchief, and last of all his sifting out the means to write to her, which he had done with that modesty and respect she could not tell how to find fault with it.

She had proceeded thus far in a maze of thought, when she started to find herself so lost to her reason, and would have trod back again that path of deluding fancy, accusing herself of fondness and inconsiderate easiness in giving credit to the letter of a person whose face she never saw, and whose first acquaintance with her was a treachery, and he who could so readily deliver his tongue of a lie upon a surprise was scarce to be trusted when he had sufficient time allowed him to beget a fiction, and means to perfect the birth.

How did she know this to be Aurelian, if he were? Nay, farther, put it to the extremity. What if she should upon

farther conversation with him proceed to love him? What hopes were there for her? Or how could she consent to marry a man already destined for another woman? Nay, a woman that was her friend, whose marrying with him was to complete the happy reconciliation of two noble families, and which might prevent the effusion of much blood likely to be shed in that quarrel. Besides, she should incur share of the guilt, which he would draw upon him by disobedience to his father, whom she was sure would not be consenting to it.

'Tis strange now but all accounts agree that just here Leonora, who had run like a violent stream against Aurelian hitherto, now retorted with as much precipitation in his favour. I could never get anybody to give me a satisfactory reason for her sudden and dexterous change of opinion just at that stop, which made me conclude she could not help it, and that nature boiled over in her at that time when it had so fair an opportunity to show itself. For Leonora, it seems, was a woman, beautiful, and otherwise of an excellent disposition, but in the bottom a very woman. This last objection, this opportunity of persuading man to disobedience, determined the matter in favour of Aurelian, more than all his excellences and qualifications, take him as Aurelian, or Hippolito, or both together.

Well, the spirit of contradiction and of Eve was strong in her, and she was in a fair way to love Aurelian, for she liked him already. That it was Aurelian she no longer doubted, for had it been a villain, who had only taken his name upon him for any ill designs, he would never have slipped so favourable an opportunity as when they were alone, and in the night coming through the garden and broad space before the Piazza. In short, thus much she resolved, at least to conceal the knowledge she had of him, as he had intreated her in his letter, and to make particular

remarks of his behaviour that day in the lists, which should it happen to charm her with an absolute liking of his person, she resolved to dress herself to the best advantage, and mustering up all her graces out of pure revenge to kill him downright.

I would not have the reader now be impertinent, and look upon this to be force, or a whim of the author's, that a woman should proceed so far in her approbation of a man whom she never saw that it is impossible, therefore ridiculous, to suppose it. Let me tell such a critic that he knows nothing of the sex, if he does not know that a woman may be taken with the character and description of a man, when general and extraordinary; that she may be prepossessed with an agreeable idea of his person and conversation; and though she cannot imagine his real features or manner of wit, yet she has a general notion of what is called a fine gentleman, and is prepared to like such a one who does not disagree with that character. Aurelian, as he bore a very fair character, so was he extremely deserving to make it good, which otherways might have been to his prejudice; for oftentimes, through an imprudent indulgence to our friend's merit, we give so large a description of his excellences that people make more room in their expectation than the intrinsic worth of the man will fill, which renders him so much the more despicable as there is emptiness to spare. 'Tis certain, though, the women seldom find that out; for though they do not see so much in a man as was promised, yet they will be so kind to imagine he has some hidden excellences which time may discover to them, so are content to allow him a considerable share of their esteem, and take him into favour upon tick. Aurelian, as he had good credit, so he had a good stock to support it, and his person was a good promising security for the payment of any obligation he could lie under to the fair sex. Hippo-

lito, who at this time was our Aurelian, did not at all lessen him in appearing for him. So that although Leonora was indeed mistaken, she could not be said to be much in the wrong. I could find in my heart to beg the reader's pardon for this digression, if I thought he would be sensible of the civility; for I promise him I do not intend to do it again throughout the story, though I make never so many, and though he take them never so ill. But because I began this upon a bare supposition of his impertinence, which might be somewhat impertinent in me to suppose, I do, and hope to make him amends by telling him that by the time Leonora was dressed, several ladies of her acquaintance came to accompany her to the place designed for the tilting, where we will leave them drinking chocolate till 'tis time for them to go.

Our cavaliers had by good fortune provided themselves of two curious suits of light armour, finely enamelled and gilt. Hippolito had sent to Poggio Imperiale for a couple of fine led horses which he had left there with the rest of his train at his entrance into Florence. Mounted on these and every way well equipped, they took their way, attended only by two lackeys, toward the church Di Santa Croce, before which they were to perform their exercises of chivalry. Hippolito wore upon his helm a large plume of crimson feathers, in the midst of which was artificially placed Leonora's handkerchief. His armour was gilt, and enamelled with green and crimson. Aurelian was not so happy as to wear any token to recommend him to the notice of his mistress, so had only a plume of sky colour and white feathers, suitable to his armour, which was silver enamelled with azure. I shall not describe the habits of any other cavaliers, or of the ladies. Let it suffice to tell the reader they were all very fine and very glorious, and let him dress them in what is most agreeable to his own fancy.

Our gallants entered the lists, and having made their obeisance to his highness turned round to salute and view the company. The scaffold was circular, so that there was no end of the delightful prospect. It seemed a glory of beauty which shone around the admiring beholders. Our lovers soon perceived the stars which were to rule their destiny, which sparkled a lustre beyond all the inferior constellations, and seemed like two suns to distribute light to all the planets in that heavenly sphere. Leonora knew her slave by his badge and blushed till the lilies and roses in her cheeks had resemblance to the plume of crimson and white handkerchief in Hippolito's crest. He made her a low bow, and reined his horse back with an extraordinary grace into a respectful retreat. Aurelian saw his angel, his beautiful Incognita, and had no other way to make himself known to her but by saluting and bowing to her after the Spanish mode. She guessed him by it to be her new servant, Hippolito, and signified her apprehension by making him a more particular and obliging return than to any of the cavaliers who had saluted her before.

The exercise that was to be performed was in general a running at the ring; and afterwards two cavaliers undertook to defend the beauty of Donna Catharina against all who would not allow her pre-eminence of their mistresses. This thing was only designed for show and form, none presuming that anybody would put so great an affront upon the bride and duke's kinswoman, as to dispute her pretensions to the first place in the court of Venus. But here our cavaliers were under a mistake; for seeing a large shield carried before two knights, with a lady painted upon it, not knowing who, but reading the inscription which was (in large gold letters), "Above the Insolence of Competition," they thought themselves obliged, especially in the presence of their mistresses, to vindicate their beauty,

and were just spurring on to engage the champions when a gentleman, stopping them, told them their mistake, that it was the picture of Donna Catharina, and a particular honour done to her by his highness's commands, and not to be disputed. Upon this they would have returned to their post, much concerned for their mistake; but notice being taken by Don Ferdinand of some show of opposition that was made, he would have begged leave of the duke to have maintained his lady's honour against the insolence of these cavaliers. But the duke would by no means permit it. They were arguing about it, when one of them came up before whom the shield was borne, and demanded his highness's permission to inform those gentlemen better of their mistake by giving them the foil. By the intercession of Don Ferdinand leave was given them; whereupon a civil challenge was sent to the two strangers, informing them of their error, and withal telling them they must either maintain it by force of arms, or make a public acknowledgment by riding bareheaded before the picture once round the lists. The stranger cavaliers remonstrated to the duke how sensible they were of their error, and though they would not justify it, yet they could not decline the combat, being pressed to it beyond an honourable refusal. To the bride they sent a compliment, wherein, having first begged her pardon for not knowing her picture, they gave her to understand, that now they were not about to dispute her undoubted right to the crown of beauty, but the honour of being her champions was the prize they fought for, which they thought themselves as able to maintain as any other pretenders. Wherefore they prayed her that if fortune so far befriended their endeavours as to make them victors, that they might receive no other reward but to be crowned with the titles of their adversaries, and be ever after esteemed as her most humble servants. The

excuse was so handsomely designed, and much better expressed than it is here, that it took effect. The duke, Don Ferdinand and his lady were so well satisfied with it as to grant their request.

While the running at the ring lasted, our cavaliers alternately bore away great share of the honour. That sport ended, marshals were appointed for the field, and everything in great form settled for the combat. The cavaliers were all in good earnest, but orders were given to bring 'em blunted lances, and to forbid the drawing of a sword upon pain of his highness's displeasure. The trumpets sounded and they began their course. The ladies' hearts, particularly the Incognita's and Leonora's, beat time to the horses' hoofs, and hope and fear made a mock fight within their tender breasts, each wishing and doubting success where she liked. But as the generality of their prayers were for the graceful strangers, they accordingly succeeded. Aurelian's adversary was unhorsed in the first encounter, and Hippolito's lost both his stirrups and drooped his lance to save himself. The honour of the field was immediately granted to them, and Donna Catharina sent them both favours, which she prayed them to wear as her knights. The crowd breaking up, our cavaliers made a shift to steal off unmarked, save by the watchful Leonora and Incognita, whose eyes were never off from their respective servants. There was inquiry made for them, but to no purpose; for they, to prevent their being discovered, had prepared another house, distant from their lodging, where a servant attended to disarm them, and another carried back their horses to the villa, while they walked unsuspected to their lodging; but Incognita had given command to a page to dog 'em till the evening, at a distance, and bring her word where they were latest housed.

While several conjectures passed among the company,

who were all gone to dinner at the palace, who those cavaliers should be, Don Fabio thought himself the only man able to guess; for he knew for certain that his son and Hippolito were both in town, and was well enough pleased with his humour of remaining *incognito* till the diversions should be over, believing then that the surprise of his discovery would add much to the gallantry he had shown in masquerade; but hearing the extraordinary liking that everybody expressed, and in a particular manner the great duke himself, to the persons and behaviour of the unknown cavaliers, the old gentleman could not forbear the vanity to tell his highness that he believed he had an interest in one of the gentlemen, whom he was pleased to honour with so favourable a character; and told him what reason he had to believe the one to be his son, and the other a Spanish nobleman, his friend.

This discovery, having thus got vent, was diffused like air; everybody sucked it in, and let it out again with their breath to the next they met withal, and in half an hour's time it was talked of in the house where our adventurers were lodged. Aurelian was stark mad at the news, and knew what search would be immediately made for him. Hippolito, had he not been desperately in love, would certainly have taken horse and rode out of town just then; for he could make no longer doubt of being discovered, and he was afraid of the just exceptions Leonora might make to a person who had now deceived her twice. Well, we will leave them both fretting and contriving to no purpose, to look about and see what was done at the palace, where their doom was determined much quicker than they imagined.

Dinner ended, the duke retired with some chosen friends to a glass of wine, among whom were the Marquess of Viterbo and Don Fabio. His highness was no stranger to

the long feud that had been between the two families, and also understood what overtures of reconciliation had been lately made, with the proposals of marriage between Aurelian and the Marquess's daughter. Having waited till the wine had taken the effect proposed, and the company were raised to an uncommon pitch of cheerfulness, which he also encouraged by an example of freedom and good humour, he took an opportunity of rallying the two grave signors into an accommodation. That was seconded with the praises of the young couple, and the whole company joined in a large encomium upon the graces of Aurelian and the beauties of Juliana. The old fellows were tickled with delight to hear their darlings so admired, which the duke perceiving, out of a principle of generosity and friendship, urged the present consummation of the marriage; telling them there was yet one day of public rejoicing to come, and how glad he should be to have it improved by so acceptable an alliance; and what an honour it would be to have his cousin's marriage attended by the conjunction of so extraordinary a pair, the performance of which ceremony would crown the joy that was then in agitation, and make the last day vie for equal glory and happiness with the first. In short, by the complaisant and persuasive authority of the duke, the dons were wrought into a compliance, and accordingly embraced and shook hands upon the matter. This news was dispersed, like the former, and Don Fabio gave orders for the inquiring out his son's lodging, that the marquess and he might make him a visit, as soon as he had acquainted Juliana with his purpose, that she might prepare herself. He found her very cheerful with Donna Catharina and several other ladies; whereupon the old gentleman, pretty well warmed with the duke's good-fellowship, told her aloud he was come to crown their mirth with another wedding; that his highness had been

pleased to provide a husband for his daughter, and he would have her provide herself to receive him to-morrow. All the company at first, as well as Juliana herself, thought he had rallied, till the duke coming in confirmed the serious part of his discourse. Juliana was confounded at the haste that was imposed on her, and desired a little time to consider what she was about. But the marquess told her she should have all the rest of her life to consider in; that Aurelian should come and consider with her in the morning, if she pleased; but in the meantime he advised her to go home and call her maids to counsel.

Juliana took her leave of the company very gravely, as if not much delighted with her father's raillery. Leonora happened to be by, and heard all that passed; she was ready to swoon, and found herself seized with a more violent passion than ever for Aurelian. Now upon her apprehensions of losing him her active fancy had brought him before her with all the advantages imaginable, and though she had before found great tenderness in her inclination toward him, yet was she somewhat surprised to find she really loved him. She was so uneasy at what she had heard that she thought it convenient to steal out of the presence and retire to her closet, to bemoan her unhappy helpless condition.

Our two cavalier lovers had racked their invention till it was quite disabled, and could not make discovery of one contrivance more for their relief. Both sat silent, each depending upon his friend, and still expecting when tother should speak. Night came upon them while they sat thus thoughtless, or rather drowned in thought; but a servant bringing lights into the room awakened them, and Hippolito's speech, ushered by a profound sigh, broke silence.

"Well," said he, "what must we do, Aurelian?"

"We must suffer," replied Aurelian faintly. When,

immediately raising his voice, he cried out: "Oh, ye unequal powers, why do ye urge us to desire what ye doom us to forbear? Give us a will to choose, then curb us with a duty to restrain that choice? Cruel father, will nothing else suffice? Am I to be the sacrifice to expiate your offences past—past ere I was born? Were I to lose my life, I'd gladly seal your reconciliation with my blood. But oh, my soul is free; you have no title to my immortal being; that has existence independent of your power; and must I lose my love, the extract of that being, the joy, light, life, and darling of my soul? No, I'll own my flame, and plead my title too. But hold, wretched Aurelian, hold! whither does thy passion hurry thee? Alas! the cruel, fair Incognita loves thee not. She knows not of thy love. If she did, what merit hast thou to pretend? Only love, excess of love. And all the world has that, all that have seen her. Yet I had only seen her once, and in that once I loved above the world, nay, loved beyond myself, such vigorous flame, so strong, so quick she darted at my breast; it must rebound, and by reflection warm herself. Ah, welcome thought, lovely deluding fancy, hang still upon my soul; let me but think that once she loves and perish my despair."

Here a sudden stop gave a period also to Hippolito's expectation, and he hoped now that his friend had given his passion so free a vent, he might recollect and bethink himself of what was convenient to be done; but Aurelian, as if he had mustered up all his spirits purely to acquit himself of that passionate harangue, stood mute and insensible like an alarm clock, that had spent all its force in one violent emotion. Hippolito shook him by the arm to rouse him from his lethargy, when his lackey coming into the room, out of breath, told him there was a coach just stopped at the door, but he did not take time to see who came in it. Aurelian concluded immediately it was his

father in quest of him; and, without saying any more to Hippolito than that he was ruined if discovered, took his sword and slipped down a back pair of stairs into the garden, from whence he conveyed himself into the street. Hippolito had not bethought himself what to do, before he perceived a lady come into the chamber close veiled and make toward him. At the first appearance of a woman his imagination flattered him with a thought of Leonora; but that was quickly over upon nearer approach to the lady, who had much the advantage in stature of his mistress. He very civilly accosted her, and asked if he were the person to whom the honour of that visit was intended. She said her business was with Don Hippolito di Saviolina, to whom she had matter of concern to impart, and which required haste. He had liked to have told her that he was the man, but by good chance reflecting upon his friend's adventure, who had taken his name, he made answer that he believed Don Hippolito not far off, and if she had a moment's patience he would inquire for him.

He went out, leaving the lady in the room, and made search all round the house and garden for Aurelian, but to no purpose. The lady, impatient of his long stay, took a pen and ink and some paper which she found upon the table, and had just made an end of her letter, when hearing a noise of more than one coming upstairs she concluded his friend had found him, and that her letter would be to no purpose, so tore it in pieces, which she repented, when turning about she found her mistake, and beheld Don Fabio and the Marquess of Viterbo just entering at the door. She gave a shriek at the surprise of their appearance, which much troubled the old gentlemen, and made them retire in confusion for putting a gentlewoman into such a fright. The marquess, thinking they had been misinformed, or had mistaken the lodgings, came forward

again, and made an apology to the lady for their error; but she, making no reply, walked directly by him downstairs and went into her coach, which hurried her away as speedily as the horses were able to draw.

The dons were at a loss what to think, when Hippolito, coming into the room to give the lady an account of his errand, was no less astonished to find she was departed, and had left two old signors in her stead. He knew Don Fabio's face, for Aurelian had shown him his father at the tilting; but, being confident he was not known to him, he ventured to ask him concerning a lady whom just now he had left in that chamber. Don Fabio told him she was just gone down, and doubted they had been guilty of a mistake in coming to inquire for a couple of gentlemen whom they were informed were lodged in that house; he begged his pardon if he had any relation to that lady, and desired to know if he could give them any account of the persons they sought for. Hippolito made answer he was a stranger in the place, and only a servant to that lady whom they had disturbed, and whom he must go and seek out. And in this perplexity he left them, going again in search of Aurelian to inform him of what had passed.

The old gentlemen at last meeting with a servant of the house were directed to Signor Claudio's chamber, where they were no sooner entered but Aurelian came into the house. A servant who had skulked for him, by Hippolito's order, followed him up into the chamber, and told him who was with Claudio then making inquiry for him. He thought that to be no place for him, since Claudio must needs discover all the truth to his father; wherefore he left directions with the servant where Hippolito should meet him in the morning. As he was going out of the room he espied the torn paper, which the lady had thrown upon the floor. The first piece he took up had Incognita written

upon it, the sight of which so alarmed him, he scarce knew what he was about; but hearing a noise of a door opening overhead, with as much care as was consistent with the haste he was then in, he gathered up the scattered pieces of paper, and betook himself to a ramble.

Coming by a light which hung at the corner of a street, he joined the torn papers and collected thus much, that his Incognita had written the note, and earnestly desired him (if there were any reality in what he pretended to her) to meet her at twelve o'clock that night at a convent gate; but unluckily the bit of paper which should have mentioned what convent was broken off and lost.

Here was a large subject for Aurelian's passion, which he did not spare to pour forth in abundance of curses on his stars. So earnest was he in the contemplation of his misfortunes, that he walked on unwittingly, till at length a silence (and such as was only to be found in that part of the town whither his unguided steps had carried him) surprised his attention. I say a profound silence roused him from his thought; and a clap of thunder could have done no more.

Now because it is possible this at some time or other may happen to be read by some malicious or ignorant person (no reflection upon the present reader), who will not admit, or does not understand, that silence should make a man start, and have the same effect, in provoking his attention, with its opposite noise, I will illustrate this matter, to such a diminutive critic, by a parallel instance of light, which though it does chiefly entertain the eyes, and is indeed the prime object of the sight, yet should it immediately cease to have a man left in the dark by a sudden deficiency of it, would make him stare with his eyes, and though he could not see, endeavour to look about him. Why just thus did it fare with our adventurer, who seeming to have wandered

both into the dominions of silence and of night, began to have some tender for his own safety, and would willingly have groped his way back again, when he heard a voice, as from a person whose breath had been stopped by some forcible oppression, and just then, by a violent effort, was broke through the restraint. "Yet—yet," again replied the voice, still struggling for air—"forbear—and I'll forgive what's past."

"I have done nothing yet that needs a pardon," says another, "and what is to come will admit of none."

Here the person who seemed to be the oppressed made several attempts to speak, but they were only inarticulate sounds, being all interrupted and choked in their passage.

Aurelian was sufficiently astonished, and would have crept nearer to the place whence he guessed the voice to come; but he was got among the ruins of an old monastery, and could not stir so silently, but some loose stones he met with made a rumbling. The noise alarmed both parties, and as it gave comfort to the one, it so terrified the tother that he could not hinder the oppressed from calling for help. Aurelian fancied it was a woman's voice, and immediately drawing his sword demanded what was the matter. He was answered with the appearance of a man, who had opened a dark lantern which he had by him, and came toward him with a pistol in his hand ready cocked.

Aurelian, seeing the irresistible advantage his adversary had over him, would fain have retired, and, by the greatest providence in the world, going backwards fell down over some loose stones that lay in his way just in that instant of time when the villain fired his pistol, who seeing him fall concluded he had shot him. The cries of the afflicted person were redoubled at the tragical sight, which made the murderer, drawing a poniard, to threaten him that the next murmur should be his last. Aurelian, who was

scarce assured that he was unhurt, got softly up, and coming near enough to perceive the violence that was used to stop the injured man's mouth (for now he saw plainly it was a man) cried out: "Turn, villain, and look upon thy death."

The fellow, amazed at the voice, turned about to have snatched up the lantern from the ground, either to have given light only to himself, or to have put out the candle, that he might have made his escape; but which of the two he designed nobody could tell but himself, and if the reader have a curiosity to know he must blame Aurelian, who thinking there could be no foul play offered to such a villain ran him immediately through the heart, so that he dropped down dead at his feet, without speaking a word. He would have seen who the person was he had thus happily delivered, but the dead body had fallen upon the lantern, which put out the candle. However, coming up toward him, he asked him how he did, and bid him be of good heart. He was answered with nothing but prayers, blessings and thanks, called a thousand deliverers, good geniuses and guardian angels. And the rescued would certainly have gone upon his knees to have worshipped him, had he not been bound hand and foot, which Aurelian understanding groped for the knots, and either untied them or cut them asunder; but 'tis more probable the latter, because more expeditious.

They took little heed what became of the body which they left behind them, and Aurelian was conducted from out the ruins by the hand of him he had delivered. By a faint light issuing from the just rising moon he could discern that it was a youth; but coming into a more frequented part of the town, where several lights were hung out, he was amazed at the extreme beauty which appeared in his face, though a little pale and disordered with his late

fright. Aurelian longed to hear the story of so odd an adventure, and entreated his charge to tell it him by the way; but he desired him to forbear till they were come into some house or other, where he might rest and recover his tired spirits, for yet he was so faint he was unable to look up. Aurelian thought these last words were delivered in a voice whose accent was not new to him. That thought made him look earnestly in the youth's face, which he now was sure he had somewhere seen before, and thereupon asked him if he had never been at Siena? That question made the young gentleman look up, and something of a joy appeared in his countenance, which yet he endeavoured to smother; so praying Aurelian to conduct him to his lodging he promised him that as soon as they should come thither, he would acquaint him with anything he desired to know. Aurelian would rather have gone anywhere else than to his own lodging; but being so very late he was at a loss, and so forced to be contented.

As soon as they were come into his chamber, and that lights were brought them and the servant dismissed, the paleness which so visibly before had usurped the sweet countenance of the afflicted youth vanished, and gave place to a more lively flood of crimson, which with a modest heat glowed freshly on his cheeks. Aurelian waited with a pleasing admiration the discovery promised him, when the youth, still struggling with his resolution, with a timorous haste pulled off a peruke which had concealed the most beautiful abundance of hair that ever graced one female head. Those dishevelled spreading tresses, as at first they made a discovery of, so at last they served for a veil to, the modest lovely blushes of the fair Incognita; for she it was and none other. But oh, the inexpressible, inconceivable joy and amazement of Aurelian! As soon as he durst venture to think, he concluded it to be all vision, and never

doubted so much of anything in his life as of his being then awake. But she taking him by the hand, and desiring him to sit down by her, partly convinced him of the reality of her presence.

"This is the second time, Don Hippolito," said she to him, "that I have been here this night. What the occasion was of my seeking you out, and how by miracle you preserved me, would add too much to the surprise I perceive you to be already in should I tell you. Nor will I make any further discovery, till I know what censure you pass upon the confidence which I have put in you, and the strange circumstances in which you find me at this time. I am sensible they are such that I shall not blame your severest conjectures; but I hope to convince you, when you shall hear what I have to say in justification of my virtue."

"Justification!" cried Aurelian. "What infidel dares doubt it?" Then kneeling down, and taking her hand: "Ah, madam," says he, "would Heaven would no other ways look upon, than I behold your perfections. Wrong not your creature with a thought he can be guilty of that horrid impiety as once to doubt your virtue. Heavens!" cried he, starting up, "am I so really blessed to see you once again? May I trust my sight, or does my fancy now only more strongly work? For still I did preserve your image in my heart, and you were ever present to my dearest thoughts."

"Enough, Hippolito, enough of rapture," said she, "you cannot much accuse me of ingratitude; for you see I have not been unmindful of you. But moderate your joy till I have told you my condition, and if for my sake you are raised to this delight, it is not of a long continuance."

At that (as Aurelian tells the story) a sigh diffused a mournful sweetness through the air, and liquid grief fell gently from her eyes, triumphant sadness sat upon her

brow, and even sorrow seemed delighted with the conquest he had made. See what a change Aurelian felt! His heart bled tears and trembled in his breast; sighs struggling for a vent had choked each other's passage up. His floods of joys were all suppressed; cold doubts and fears had chilled 'em with a sudden frost, and he was troubled to excess, yet knew not why. Well, the learned say it was sympathy, and I am always of the opinion with the learned, if they speak first.

After a world of condolence had passed between them he prevailed with her to tell him her story. So having put all her sighs into one great sigh, she discharged herself of 'em all at once, and formed the relation you are just about to read.

"Having been in my infancy contracted to a man I could never endure, and now by my parents being likely to be forced to marry him, is, in short, the great occasion of my grief. I fancied," continued she, "something so generous in your countenance, and uncommon in your behaviour, while you were diverting yourself and rallying me with expressions of gallantry at the ball, as induced me to hold conference with you. I now freely confess to you, out of design, that if things should happen as I then feared, and as now they are to come to pass, I might rely upon your assistance in a matter of concern, and in which I would sooner choose to depend upon a generous stranger than any acquaintance I have. What mirth and freedom I then put on were, I can assure you, far distant from my heart; but I did violence to myself out of complaisance to your temper. I knew you at the tilting, and wished you might come off as you did; though I do not doubt but you would have had as good success had it been opposite to my inclinations. Not to detain you by too tedious a relation, every day my friends urged me to the match they had agreed upon for me,

before I was capable of consenting. At last their importunities grew to that degree that I found I must either consent, which would make me miserable, or be miserable by perpetually enduring to be baited by my father, brother and other relations. I resolved yesterday, on a sudden, to give firm faith to the opinion I had conceived of you, and accordingly came in the evening to request your assistance in delivering me from my tormentors by a safe and private conveyance of me to a monastery about four leagues hence, where I have an aunt who would receive me, and is the only relation I have averse to the match. I was surprised at the appearance of some company I did not expect at your lodgings, which made me in haste tear a paper which I had written you with directions where to find me, and get speedily away in my coach to an old servant's house, whom I acquainted with my purpose. By my order she provided me of this habit which I now wear. I ventured to trust myself with her brother, and resolved to go under his conduct to the monastery. He proved to be a villain, and pretending to take me a short and private way to the place where he was to take up a hackney coach (for that which I came in was broke somewhere or other with the haste it made to carry me from your lodging), led me into an old ruined monastery, where it pleased Heaven, by what accident I know not, to direct you. I need not tell you how you saved my life and my honour by revenging me with the death of my perfidious guide. This is the sum of my present condition, bating the apprehensions I am in of being taken by some of my relations and forced to a thing so quite contrary to my inclinations."

Aurelian was confounded at the relation she had made, and began to fear his own estate to be more desperate than ever he had imagined. He made her a very passionate and eloquent speech in behalf of himself (much better than I

intend to insert here), and expressed a mighty concern that she should look upon his ardent affection to be only raillery or gallantry. He was very free of his oaths to confirm the truth of what he pretended, nor I believe did she doubt it, or at least was unwilling so to do, for I would caution the reader, by the by, not to believe every word which she told him, nor that admirable sorrow which she counterfeited to be accurately true. It was indeed truth so cunningly intermingled with fiction that it required no less wit and presence of mind than she was endowed with so to acquit herself on the sudden. She had entrusted herself indeed with a fellow who proved a villain, to conduct her to a monastery; but one which was in the town, and where she intended only to lie concealed for his sake, as the reader shall understand ere long, for we have another discovery to make to him, if he have not found it out of himself already.

After Aurelian had said what he was able upon the subject in hand, with a mournful tone and dejected look he demanded his doom. She asked him if he would endeavour to convey her to the monastery she had told him of?

"Your commands, madam," replied he, "are sacred to me; and were they to lay down my life I would obey them."

With that he would have gone out of the room, to have given order for his horses to be got ready immediately; but with a countenance so full of sorrow as moved compassion in the tender-hearted Incognita.

"Stay a little, Don Hippolito," said she, "I fear I shall not be able to undergo the fatigue of a journey this night. Stay and give me your advice how I shall conceal myself if I continue to-morrow in this town."

Aurelian could have satisfied her she was not then in a place to avoid discovery. But he must also have told her then the reason of it, *viz.* whom he was, and who were in quest of him, which he did not think convenient to

declare till necessity should urge him; for he feared least her knowledge of those designs which were in agitation between him and Juliana might deter her more from giving her consent. At last he resolved to try his utmost persuasions to gain her, and told her accordingly he was afraid she would be disturbed there in the morning, and he knew no other way, if she had not as great an aversion for him as the man whom she now endeavoured to avoid, than by making him happy to make herself secure. He demonstrated to her that the disobligation to her parents would be greater by going to a monastery, since it was only to avoid a choice which they had made for her, and which she could not have so just a pretence to do till she had made one for herself.

A world of other arguments he used, which she contradicted as long as she was able, or at least willing. At last she told him she would consult her pillow, and in the morning conclude what was fit to be done. He thought it convenient to leave her to her rest, and having locked her up in his room went himself to repose upon a pallet by Signor Claudio.

In the meantime it may be convenient to inquire what became of Hippolito. He had wandered much in pursuit of Aurelian, though Leonora equally took up his thoughts. He was reflecting upon the oddness and extravagance of his circumstances, the continuation of which had doubtless created in him a great uneasiness, when it was interrupted with the noise of opening the gates of the convent of St. Lawrence, whither he was arrived sooner than he thought for, being the place Aurelian had appointed by the lackey to meet him in. He wondered to see the gates opened at so unseasonable an hour, and went to inquire the reason of it from them who were employed; but they proved to be novices, and made him signs to go in, where he might meet

with somebody allowed to answer him. He found the religious men all up, and tapers lighting everywhere. At last he followed a friar who was going into the garden, and asking him the cause of these preparations he was answered that they were entreated to pray for the soul of a cavalier, who was just departing or departed this life, and whom upon further talk with him he found to be the same Lorenzo so often mentioned. Don Mario it seems, uncle to Lorenzo and father to Leonora, had a private door out of the garden belonging to his house into that of the convent, which door this father was now a-going to open, that he and his family might come and offer up their orisons for the soul of their kinsman. Hippolito, having informed himself of as much as he could ask without suspicion, took his leave of the friar, not a little joyful at the hopes he had by such unexpected means of seeing his beautiful Leonora. As soon as he was got at convenient distance from the friar (who 'tis like thought he had returned into the convent to his devotion), he turned back through a close walk which led him with a little compass to the same private door, where just before he had left the friar, who now he saw was gone and the door open.

He went into Don Mario's garden, and walked round with much caution and circumspection, for the moon was then about to rise, and had already diffused a glimmering light sufficient to distinguish a man from a tree. By computation now (which is a very remarkable circumstance) Hippolito entered this garden near upon the same instant when Aurelian wandered into the old monastery, and found his Incognita in distress. He was pretty well acquainted with the platform and sight of the garden, for he had formerly surveyed the outside, and knew what part to make to if he should be surprised and driven to a precipitate escape. He took his stand behind a well-grown bush of

myrtle, which, should the moon shine brighter than was required, had the advantage to be shaded by the indulgent boughs of an ancient bay tree. He was delighted with the choice he had made, for he found a hollow in the myrtle, as if purposely contrived for the reception of one person, who might undiscovered perceive all about him. He looked upon it as a good omen that the tree consecrated to Venus was so propitious to him in his amorous distress. The consideration of that together with the obligation he lay under to the muses, for sheltering him also with so large a crown of bays, had like to have set him a-rhyming.

He was, to tell the truth, naturally addicted to madrigal, and we should undoubtedly have had a small desert of numbers to have picked and criticised upon, had he not been interrupted just upon his delivery, nay, after the preliminary sigh had made way for his utterance. But so was his fortune, Don Mario was coming towards the door at that very nick of time, where he met with a priest just out of breath, who told him that Lorenzo was just breathing his last, and desired to know if he would come and take his final leave before they were to administer the extreme unction. Don Mario, who had been at some difference with his nephew, now thought it his duty to be reconciled to him; so calling to Leonora, who was coming after him, he bid her go to her devotions in the chapel, and told her where he was going.

He went on with the priest, while Hippolito saw Leonora come forward, only accompanied by her woman. She was in an undress, and by reason of a melancholy visible in her face, more careless than usual in her attire, which he thought added as much as was possible to the abundance of her charms. He had not much time to contemplate this beautiful vision, for she soon passed into the garden of the convent, leaving him confounded with love, admiration,

joy, hope, fear, and all the train of passions which seize upon men in his condition, all at once. He was so teased with this variety of torment that he never missed the two hours that had slipped away during his automachy and intestine conflict. Leonora's return settled his spirits, at least united them, and he had now no other thought but how he should present himself before her, when she, calling her woman, bid her bolt the garden door on the inside, that she might not be surprised by her father, if he returned through the convent. Which done, she ordered her to bring down her lute, and leave her to herself in the garden.

All this Hippolito saw and heard to his inexpressible content, yet had he much to do to smother his joy and hinder it from taking a vent, which would have ruined the only opportunity of his life. Leonora withdrew into an arbour so near him that he could distinctly hear her if she played or sung. Having tuned her lute, with a voice soft as the breath of angels, she flung to it this following air:

Ah! whither, whither shall I fly,
A poor unhappy maid,
To hopeless love and misery
By my own heart betrayed?
Not by Alexis's eyes undone,
Nor by his charming faithless tongue,
Or any practised art;
Such real ills may hope a cure,
But the sad pains which I endure
Proceed from fancied smart.

'Twas fancy gave Alexis charms,
Ere I beheld his face;
Kind fancy then could fold our arms,
And form a soft embrace.
But since I've seen the real swain,

And tried to fancy him again,
I'm by my fancy taught,
Though 'tis a bliss no tongue can tell
To have Alexis, yet 'tis hell
To have him but in thought.

The song ended grieved Hippolito that it was so soon ended, and in the ecstasy he was then wrapped I believe he would have been satisfied to have expired with it. He could not help flattering himself (though at the same time he checked his own vanity) that he was the person meant in the song. While he was indulging which thought, to his happy astonishment he heard it encouraged by these words:

“Unhappy Leonora,” said she, “how is thy poor unwary heart misled! Whither am I come? The false deluding lights of an imaginary flame have led me, a poor benighted victim, to a real fire. I burn and am consumed with hopeless love. Those beams in whose soft temperate warmth I wantoned heretofore now flash destruction to my soul; my treacherous greedy eyes have sucked the glaring light; they have united all its rays, and, like a burning glass conveyed the pointed meteor to my heart. Ah, Aurelian, how quickly hast thou conquered, and how quickly must thou forsake! Oh, happy, to me unfortunately happy, Juliana! I am to be the subject of thy triumph. To thee Aurelian comes laden with the tribute of my heart and glories in the oblation of his broken vows. What then, is Aurelian false? False! Alas, I know not what I say. How can he be false, or true, or anything to me? What promises did he e'er make or I receive? Sure I dream, or I am mad, and fancy it to be love. Foolish girl, recall thy banished reason. Ah, would it were no more, would I could rave, sure that would give me ease, and rob

me of the sense of pain. At least among my wandering thoughts I should at some time light upon Aurelian, and fancy him to be mine. Kind madness would flatter my poor feeble wishes, and sometimes tell me Aurelian is not lost—not irrecoverably—not for ever lost.”

Hippolito could hear no more; he had not room for half his transport. When Leonora perceived a man coming toward her, she fell a-trembling, and could not speak. Hippolito approached with reverence, as to a sacred shrine, when coming near enough to see her consternation he fell upon his knees.

“Behold, O adored Leonora,” said he, “your ravished Aurelian; behold at your feet the happiest of men. Be not disturbed at my appearance, but think that Heaven conducted me to hear my bliss pronounced by that dear mouth alone, whose breath could fill me with new life.”

Here he would have come nearer, but Leonora, scarce come to herself, was getting up in haste to have gone away. He caught her hand, and with all the endearments of love and transport pressed her stay. She was a long time in great confusion. At last, with many blushes, she entreated him to let her go where she might hide her guilty head, and not expose her shame before his eyes, since his ears had been sufficient witnesses of her crime. He begged pardon for his treachery in over-hearing, and confessed it to be a crime he had now repented. With a thousand submissions, entreaties, prayers, praises, blessings and passionate expressions he wrought upon her to stay and hear him. Here Hippolito made use of his rhetoric, and it proved prevailing. ’Twere tedious to tell the many ingenious arguments he used, with all her nice distinctions and objections. In short, he convinced her of his passion, represented to her the necessity they were under of being speedy in their resolves, that his father (for still he was Aurelian) would

undoubtedly find him in the morning, and then it would be too late to repent. She, on the other hand, knew it was in vain to deny a passion, which he had heard her so frankly own (and no doubt was very glad it was past and done); besides apprehending the danger of delay, and having some little jealousies and fears of what effect might be produced between the commands of his father and the beauties of Juliana. After some decent denials she consented to be conducted by him through the garden into the convent, where she would prevail with her confessor to marry them. He was a scrupulous old father whom they had to deal withal, inasmuch that ere they had persuaded him Don Mario was returned by the way of his own house, where missing his daughter, and her woman not being able to give any farther account of her than that she left her in the garden, he concluded she was gone again to her devotions, and indeed he found her in the chapel upon her knees with Hippolito in her hand, receiving the father's benediction upon conclusion of the ceremony.

It would have asked a very skilful hand to have depicted to the life the faces of those three persons at Don Mario's appearance. He that has seen some admirable piece of transmutation by a gorgon's head may form to himself the most probable idea of the prototype. The old gentleman was himself in a sort of a wood* to find his daughter with a young fellow and a priest, but as yet he did not know the worst, till Hippolito and Leonora came, and kneeling at his feet, begged his forgiveness and blessing as his son and daughter. Don Mario, instead of that, fell into a most violent passion, and would undoubtedly have committed some extravagant action, had he not been restrained more by the sanctity of the place, than the persuasions of all the

* At a loss.

religious, who were now come about him. Leonora stirred not off her knees all this time, but continued begging of him that he would hear her.

“Ah! Ungrateful and undutiful wretch,” cried he, “how hast thou required all my care and tenderness of thee! Now, when I might have expected some return of comfort, to throw thyself away upon an unknown person, and, for aught I know, a villain! To me I’m sure he is a villain, who has robbed me of my treasure, my darling joy, and all the future happiness of my life prevented. Go, go, thou now-to-be-forgotten Leonora, go and enjoy thy unprosperous choice; you, who wanted not a father’s counsel, cannot need, or else will slight, his blessing.”

These last words were spoken with so much passion and feeling concern, that Leonora, moved with excess of grief, fainted at his feet, just as she had caught hold to embrace his knees. The old man would have shook her off, but compassion and fatherly affection came upon him in the midst of his resolve, and melted him into tears. He embraced his daughter in his arms, and wept over her, while they endeavoured to restore her senses.

Hippolito was in such concern he could not speak, but was busily employed in rubbing and chafing her temples, when she, opening her eyes laid hold of his arm, and cried out: “Oh, my Aurelian, how unhappy have you made me!” With that she had again like to have fainted away, but he shook her in his arms, and begged Don Mario to have some pity on his daughter, since by his severity she was reduced to that condition. The old man, hearing his daughter name Aurelian, was a little revived, and began to hope things were in a pretty good condition. He was persuaded to comfort her, and, having brought her wholly to herself, was content to hear her excuse, and in a little time was so far wrought upon as to beg Hippolito’s pardon for

the ill opinion he had conceived of him, and not long after gave his consent.

The night was spent in this conflict, and it was now clear day, when Don Mario, conducting his new son and daughter through the garden, was met by some servants of the Marquess of Viterbo, who had been inquiring for Donna Leonora, to know if Juliana had lately been with her; for that she was missing from her father's house, and no conjectures could be made of what might become of her. Don Mario and Leonora were surprised at the news, for he knew well enough of the match that was designed for Juliana; and, having inquired where the marquess was, it was told him that he was gone with Don Fabio and Fabritio toward Aurelian's lodgings. Don Mario having assured the servants that Juliana had not been there, dismissed them, and advised with his son and daughter how they should undeceive the marquess and Don Fabio in their expectations of Aurelian. Hippolito could oftentimes scarce forbear smiling at the old man's contrivances who was most deceived himself. He at length advised them to go all down together to his lodging, where he would present himself before his father, and ingenuously confess to him the truth, and he did not question his approving of his choice.

This was agreed to, and the coach made ready. While they were upon their way, Hippolito prayed heartily that his friend Aurelian might be at the lodging to satisfy Don Mario and Leonora of his circumstances and quality, when he should be obliged to discover himself. His petitions were granted, for Don Fabio had beset the house long before his son was up or Incognita awake.

Upon the arrival of Don Mario and Hippolito they heard a great noise and hubub above stairs, which Don Mario concluded was occasioned by their not finding

Aurelian, whom he thought he could give the best account of. So that it was not in Hippolito's power to dissuade him from going up before to prepare his father to receive and forgive him. While Hippolito and Leonora were left in the coach at the door, he made himself known to her, and begged her pardon a thousand times for continuing the deceit. She was under some concern at first to find she was still mistaken; but his behaviour and the reasons he gave soon reconciled him to her. His person was altogether as agreeable, his estate and quality not at all inferior to Aurelian's. In the meantime, the true Aurelian, who had seen his father, begged leave of him to withdraw for a moment, in which time he went into the chamber where his Incognita was dressing herself, by his design, in woman's apparel. While he was consulting with her how they should break the matter to his father, it happened that Don Mario came upstairs where the marquess and Don Fabio were. They undoubtedly concluded him mad to hear him making apologies and excuses for Aurelian, whom he told them if they would promise to forgive he would present before them immediately. The marquess asked him if his daughter had lain with Leonora that night; he answered him with another question in behalf of Aurelian. In short, they could not understand one another, but each thought tother beside himself. Don Mario was so concerned that they would not believe him that he ran downstairs and came to the door out of breath, desiring Hippolito that he would come into the house quickly, for that he could not persuade his father but that he had already seen and spoke to him. Hippolito by that understood that Aurelian was in the house; so, taking Leonora by the hand, he followed Don Mario, who led him up into the dining-room, where they found Aurelian upon his knees, begging his father to forgive him that he could not agree to the choice he had

made for him, since he had already disposed of himself, and that before he understood the designs he had for him, which was the reason that he had hitherto concealed himself. Don Fabio knew not how to answer him, but looked upon the marquess, and the marquess upon him, as if the cement had been cooled which was to have united their families.

All was silent, and Don Mario for his part took it to be all conjuration. He was coming forward to present Hippolito to them, when Aurelian, spying his friend, started from his knees and ran to embrace him. "My dear Hippolito," said he, "what happy chance has brought you hither, just at my necessity?"

Hippolito pointed to Don Mario and Leonora, and told him upon what terms he came. Don Mario was ready to run mad hearing him called Hippolito, and went again to examine his daughter. While she was informing him of the truth, the marquess's servants returned with the melancholy news that his daughter was nowhere to be found. While the marquess and Don Fabritio were wondering at and lamenting the misfortune of her loss, Hippolito came towards Don Fabio and interceded for his son, since the lady perhaps had withdrawn herself out of an aversion to the match. Don Fabio, though very much incensed, yet forgot not the respect due to Hippolito's quality, and by his persuasion spoke to Aurelian, though with a stern look and angry voice, and asked him where he had disposed the cause of his disobedience, if he were worthy to see her or no. Aurelian made answer that he desired no more than for him to see her, and he did not doubt a consequence of his approbation and forgiveness.

"Well," said Don Fabio, "you are very conceited of your own discretion; let us see this rarity."

While Aurelian was gone in for Incognita, the Marquess

of Viterbo and Don Fabritio were taking their leaves in great disorder for their loss and disappointment; but Don Fabio entreated their stay a moment longer till the return of his son. Aurelian led Incognita into the room veiled, who, seeing some company there which he had not told her of, would have gone back again. But Don Fabio came bluntly forwards, and, ere she was aware, lifted up her veil and beheld the fair Incognita, differing nothing from Juliana, but in her name. This discovery was so extremely surprising and welcome that either joy or amazement had tied up the tongues of the whole company. Aurelian here was most at a loss, for he knew not of his happiness; and that which all along prevented Juliana's confessing herself to him, was her knowing Hippolito (for whom she took him) to be Aurelian's friend, and she feared, if he had known her, that he would never have consented to have deprived him of her. Juliana was the first that spoke, falling upon her knees to her father, who was not enough himself to take her up. Don Fabio ran to her, and awakened the marquess, who then embraced her, but could not yet speak. Fabritio and Leonora strove who should first take her in their arms. For Aurelian, he was out of his wits for joy, and Juliana was not much behind him, to see how happily their loves and duties were reconciled. Don Fabio embraced his son and forgave him. The marquess and Fabritio gave Juliana into his hands; he received the blessing upon his knees; all were overjoyed; and Don Mario not a little proud at the discovery of his son-in-law, whom Aurelian did not fail to set forth with all the ardent zeal and eloquence of friendship. Juliana and Leonora had pleasant discourse about their unknown and mistaken rivalship, and it was the subject of a great deal of mirth to hear Juliana relate the several contrivances which she had to avoid Aurelian for the sake of Hippolito.

Having diverted themselves with many remarks upon the pleasing surprise, they all thought it proper to attend upon the great duke that morning at the palace, and to acquaint him with the novelty of what has passed; while, by the way, the two young couples entertained the company with the relation of several particulars of their three days' adventures.

SELECTED POEMS

SELECTED POEMS

ON MRS. ARABELLA HUNT SINGING IRREGULAR ODE

I

LET all be hushed, each softest motion cease,
Be every loud tumultuous thought at peace
And every ruder gasp of breath
Be calm as in the arms of death.
And thou most fickle, most uneasy part,
Thou restless wanderer, my heart,
Be still; gently, ah gently, leave,
Thou busy, idle thing, to heave.
Stir not a pulse; and let my blood,
That turbulent, unruly flood,
Be softly stayed:
Let me be all, but my attention, dead.
Go, rest, unnecessary springs of life,
Leave your officious toil and strife;
For I would hear her voice, and try
If it be possible to die.

II

Come, all ye love-sick maids and wounded swains,
And listen to her healing strains.
A wondrous balm between her lips she wears,
Of sovereign force to soften cares;
And this through every ear she can impart,
By tuneful breath diffused to every heart.
Swiftly the gentle charmer flies,

And to the tender grief soft air applies,
Which, warbling mystic sounds,
Cements the bleeding panter's wounds.
But ah, beware of clamorous moan,
Let no displeasing murmur or harsh groan,
Your slighted loves declare;
Your very tenderest moving sighs forbear,
For even they will be too boisterous here.
Hither let nought but sacred silence come,
And let all saucy praise be dumb.

III

And lo! silence himself is here;
Methinks I see the midnight god appear,
In all his downy pomp arrayed.
Behold the reverend shade,
An ancient sigh he sits upon,
Whose memory of sound is long since gone,
And purposely annihilated for his throne.
Beneath, two soft transparent clouds do meet,
In which he seems to sink his softer feet.
A melancholy thought, condensed to air,
Stolen from a lover in despair,
Like a thin mantle, serves to wrap
In fluid folds his visionary shape.
A wreath of darkness round his head he wears,
Where curling mists supply the want of hairs,
While the still vapours, which from poppies rise,
Bedew his hoary face, and lull his eyes.

IV

But hark! the heavenly sphere turns round,
And silence now is drowned
In ecstasy of sound.
How on a sudden the still air is charmed,

As if all harmony were just alarmed!
And every soul, with transport filled,
Alternately is thawed and chilled.
See how the heavenly choir
Come flocking to admire,
And with what speed and care
Descending angels cull the thinnest air!
Haste then, come all th' immortal throng,
And listen to her song;
Leave your loved mansions in the sky,
And hither, quickly hither, fly;
Your loss of heaven nor shall you need to fear,
While she sings, 'tis heaven here.

V

See how they crowd, see how the little cherubs skip!
While others sit around her mouth, and sip
Sweet Alleluias from her lip—
Those lips where in surprise of bliss they rove;
For ne'er before did angels taste
So exquisite a feast
Of music and of love.
Prepare then, ye immortal choir,
Each sacred minstrel tune his lyre,
And with her voice in chorus join—
Her voice, which next to yours is most divine.
Bless the glad earth with heavenly lays,
And to that pitch th' eternal accents raise,
Which only breath inspired can reach,
To notes, which only she can learn, and you can teach;
While we, charmed with the loved excess,
Are wrapped in sweet forgetfulness
Of all, of all, but of the present happiness,
Wishing for ever in that state to lie,
For ever to be dying so, yet never die.

STANZAS

IN IMITATION OF
HORACE, LIB. II. ODE XIV.

*Eheu fugaces, Posthume, Posthume,
Labuntur anni, etc.*

I

AH, no, 'tis all in vain, believe me 'tis
This pious artifice.
Not all these prayers and alms can buy
One moment toward eternity—
Eternity, that boundless race
Which Time himself can never run,
Swift as he flies with an unwearied pace,
Which, when ten thousand, thousand years are done,
Is still the same, and still to be begun.
Fixed are those limits, which prescribe
A short extent to the most lasting breath;
And though thou couldst for sacrifice lay down
Millions of other lives to save thy own,
'Twere fruitless all; not all would bribe
One supernumerary gasp from death.

II

In vain's thy inexhausted store
Of wealth, in vain thy power;
Thy honours, titles, all must fail,
Where piety itself can nought avail.
The rich, the great, the innocent and just,
Must all be huddled to the grave
With the most vile and ignominious slave,
And undistinguished lie in dust.
In vain the fearful flies alarms,

In vain he is secure from wounds of arms,
In vain avoids the faithless seas,
And is confined to home and ease,
Bounding his knowledge to extend his days;
In vain are all those arts we try,
All our evasions and regret to die.
From the contagion of mortality
No clime is pure, no air is free,
And no retreat
Is so obscure as to be hid from fate.

III

Thou must, alas! thou must, my friend,
(The very hour thou now dost spend
In studying to avoid, brings on thy end)
Thou must forego the dearest joys of life,
Leave the warm bosom of thy tender wife.
And all the much-loved offspring of her womb,
To moulder in the cold embraces of a tomb.
All must be left, and all be lost;
Thy house, whose stately structure so much cost,
Shall not afford
Room for the stinking carcase of its lord.
Of all thy pleasant gardens, grotts and bowers,
Thy costly fruits, thy far-fetched plants and
flowers,
Nought shalt thou save,
Or but a sprig of rosemary* shalt have
To wither with thee in the grave;
The rest shall live and flourish to upbraid
Their transitory master dead.

* In Horace it is *cypress*. A little rosemary was often put into the coffin in England.

IV

Then shall thy long-expecting heir
A joyful mourning wear,
And riot in the waste of that estate
Which thou has taken so much pains to get.
All thy hid stores he shall unfold,
And set at large thy captive gold;
That precious wine, condemned by thee
To vaults and prisons, shall again be free;
Buried alive though now it lies,
Again shall rise,
Again its sparkling surface show,
And free as element profusely flow.
With such high food he shall set forth his feasts
That cardinals shall wish to be his guests,
And pampered prelates see
Themselves outdone in luxury.

IN IMITATION OF
HORACE, ODE IX. LIB. I

Vides ut alta, etc.

I

BLESS me, 'tis cold! How chill the air!
How naked does the world appear!
But see (big with the offspring of the north)
The teeming clouds bring forth;
A shower of soft and fleecy rain
Falls to new-clothe the earth again.
Behold the mountain-tops around,
As if with fur of ermines crowned;
And lo! how by degrees

The universal mantle hides the trees
In hoary flakes, which downward fly,
As if it were the autumn of the sky.
Trembling, the groves sustain the weight, and bow
Like aged limbs, which feebly go
Beneath a venerable head of snow.

II

Diffusive cold does the whole earth invade;
Like a disease, through all its veins 'tis spread,
And each late living stream is numbed and dead.
Let's melt the frozen hours, make warm the air;
Let cheerful fires Sol's feeble beams repair.
Fill the large bowl with sparkling wine;
Let's drink, till our own faces shine,
Till we like suns appear
To light and warm the hemisphere.
Wine can dispense to all both light and heat,
They are with wine incorporate:
That powerful juice, with which no cold dares mix,
Which still is fluid, and no frost can fix,
Let that but in abundance flow,
And let it storm and thunder, hail and snow,
'Tis Heaven's concern; and let it be
The care of Heaven still for me.
These winds, which rend the oaks and plough the
seas,
Great Jove can, if he please,
With one commanding nod appease.

III

Seek not to know to-morrow's doom;
That is not ours, which is to come.
The present moment's all our store,

The next, should Heaven allow,
Then this will be no more:
So all our life is but one instant now.
Look on each day you've past
To be a mighty treasure won,
And lay each moment out in haste;
We're sure to live too fast,
And cannot live too soon.
Youth does a thousand pleasures bring,
Which from decrepit age will fly;
The flowers that flourish in the spring
In winter's cold embraces die.

IV

Now love, that everlasting boy, invites
To revel while you may in soft delights;
Now the kind nymph yields all her charms,
Nor yields in vain to youthful arms.
Slowly she promises at night to meet,
But eagerly prevents the hour with swifter feet;
To gloomy groves and obscure shades she flies,
There veils the bright confession of her eyes.
Unwillingly she stays,
Would more unwillingly depart,
And in soft sighs conveys
The whispers of her heart.
Still she invites and still denies,
And vows she'll leave you if you're rude;
Then from her ravisher she flies,
But flies to be pursued:
If from his sight she does herself convey,
With a feigned laugh she will herself betray,
And cunningly instruct him in the way.

THE DECAY

SAY not, Olinda, I despise

The faded glories of your face,
The languished vigour of your eyes,
And that once only loved embrace.

In vain, in vain my constant heart

On aged wings attempts to meet
With wonted speed those flames you dart;
It faints and flutters at your feet.

I blame not your decay of power;

You may have pointed beauties still,
Though me, alas, they wound no more;
You cannot hurt what cannot feel.

On youthful climes your beams display;

There you may cherish with your heat,
And rise the sun to gild their day,
To me benighted when you set.

SONG

I

TELL me no more I am deceived,
That Cloe's false and common;
I always knew, at least believed,
She was a very woman.

As such I liked, as such caressed,
She still was constant when possessed,
She could do more for no man.

II

But oh, her thoughts on others ran,
And that you think a hard thing;

Perhaps she fancied you the man,
And what care I one farthing?
You think she's false, I'm sure she's kind;
I take her body, you her mind,
Who has the better bargain?

SONG

I

Pious Selinda* goes to prayers,
If I but ask the favour;
And yet the tender fool's in tears,
When she believes I'll leave her.

II

Would I were free from this restraint,
Or else had hopes to win her;
Would she could make of me a saint,
Or I of her a sinner.

VERSES TO THE MEMORY OF
GRACE LADY GETHIN
OCCASIONED BY READING HER BOOK, ENTITLED
RELIQUIÆ GETHINIANÆ

AFTER a painful life in study spent,
The learned themselves their ignorance lament;
And aged men, whose lives exceed the space
Which seems the bound prescribed to mortal race,
With hoary heads, their short experience grieve,
As doomed to die before they've learned to live.
So hard it is true knowledge to attain,

* Selinda is thought to have been Mrs. Bracegirdle.

So frail is life, and fruitless human pain!
Whoe'er on this reflects, and then beholds
With strict attention what this book unfolds,
With admiration struck, shall question who
So very long could live, so much to know?
For so complete the finished piece appears
That learning seems combined with length of years,
And both, improved by purest wit, to reach,
At all that study, or that time can teach.
But to what height must his amazement rise,
When, having read the work, he turns his eyes
Again to view the foremost opening page,
And there the beauty, sex, and tender age
Of her beholds, in whose pure mind arose
The ethereal source from whence this current flows!*

When prodigies appear our reason fails,
And superstition o'er philosophy prevails.
Some heavenly minister we straight conclude,
Some angel-mind with female form endued,
To make a short abode on earth, was sent,
(Where no perfection can be permanent)
And, having left her bright example here,
Was quick recalled, and bid to disappear.
Whether around the throne eternal hymns
She sings amid the choir of seraphims,
Or some refulgent star informs and guides,
Where she, the blest intelligence, presides,
Is not for us to know who here remain.
For 'twere as impious to inquire as vain,
And all we ought, or can in this dark state,
Is what we have admired to imitate.

* Lady Gethin died in 1697 in her twenty-second year. Her *Reliquiæ*, which were published with her portrait as a frontispiece, have been discovered to be excerpts from various seventeenth-century moralists, particularly Bacon.

SONG

I

I LOOKED, and I sighed, and I wished I could speak,
And very fain would have been at her;
But when I strove most my great passion to break,
Still then I said least of the matter.

II

I swore to myself, and resolved I would try
Some way my poor heart to recover;
But that was all vain, for I sooner could die
Than live with forbearing to love her.

III

Dear Cælia, be kind then; and since your own eyes
By looks can command adoration,
Give mine leave to talk too, and do not despise
Those oglings that tell you my passion.

IV

We'll look, and we'll love, and though neither should
speak,
The pleasure we'll still be pursuing;
And so, without words, I don't doubt we may make
A very good end of this wooing.

SONG

I

SEE, see she wakes, Sabina wakes!
And now the sun begins to rise;
Less glorious is the morn that breaks
From his bright beams than her fair eyes.

II

With light united, day they give,
But different fates ere night fulfil:
How many by his warmth will live!
How many will her coldness kill!

EPITAPH UPON
ROBERT HUNTINGTON, ESQ.
OF STANTON HARCOURT
AND ROBERT HIS SON

THIS peaceful tomb does now contain
Father and son together laid,
Whose living virtues shall remain,
When they and this are quite decayed.

What man should be, to ripeness grown,
And finished worth should do or shun,
At full was in the father shown;
What youth could promise, in the son.

But death, obdurate, both destroyed,
The perfect fruit and opening bud;
First seized those sweets we had enjoyed,
Then robbed us of the coming good.

AMORET

I

FAIR Amoret is gone astray;
Pursue and seek her, every lover;
I'll tell the signs by which you may
The wandering shepherdess discover.

II

Coquette and coy at once her air,
Both studied, though both seem neglected;
Careless she is with artful care,
Affecting to seem unaffected.

III

With skill her eyes dart every glance,
Yet change so soon you'd ne'er suspect 'em;
For she'd persuade they wound by chance,
Though certain aim and art direct 'em.

IV

She likes herself, yet others hates
For that which in herself she prizes;
And, while she laughs at them, forgets
She is the thing that she despises.

SONG

FALSE though she be to me and love,
I'll ne'er pursue revenge;
For still the charmer I approve,
Though I deplore her change.

In hours of bliss we oft have met,
They could not always last;
And though the present I regret,
I'm grateful for the past.

DORIS

DORIS, a nymph of riper age,
Has ev'ry grace and art
A wise observer to engage,
Or wound a heedless heart.

Of native blush and rosy dye
Time has her cheek bereft;
Which makes the prudent nymph supply
With paint th' injurious theft.
Her sparkling eyes she still retains,
And teeth in good repair;
And her well-furnished front disdains
To grace with borrowed hair.
Of size she is nor short nor tall,
And does to fat incline
No more than what the French would call,
Aimable embonpoint.
Farther her person to disclose
I leave; let it suffice
She has few faults but what she knows,
And can with skill disguise.
She many lovers has refused,
With many more complied;
Which, like her clothes, when little used,
She always lays aside.
She's one, who looks with great contempt
On each affected creature,
Whose nicety would seem exempt
From appetites of Nature.
She thinks they want or health or sense,
Who want an inclination,
And therefore never takes offence
At him who pleads his passion.
Whom she refuses she treats still
With so much sweet behaviour,
That her refusal, through her skill,
Looks almost like a favour.
Since she this softness can express
To those whom she rejects,

She must be very fond, you'll guess,
Of such whom she affects.
But here our Doris far outgoes
All that her sex have done;
She no regard for custom knows,
Which reason bids her shun.
By reason her own reason's meant,
Or, if you please, her will;
For when this last is discontent,
The first is served but ill.
Peculiar therefore is her way;
Whether by Nature taught,
I shall not undertake to say,
Or by experience bought.
But who o'er-night obtained her grace,
She can next day disown,
And stare upon the strange man's face,
As one she ne'er had known.
So well she can the truth disguise,
Such artful wonder frame,
The lover or distrusts his eyes,
Or thinks 'twas all a dream.
Some censure this as lewd and low,
Who are to bounty blind;
For to forget what we bestow,
Bespeaks a noble mind.
Doris our thanks nor asks nor needs,
For all her favours done
From her love flows, as light proceeds
Spontaneous from the sun.
On one or other still her fires
Display their genial force;
And she, like Sol, alone retires
To shine elsewhere, of course.

AN IMPOSSIBLE THING
A TALE

To thee, dear Dick,* this tale I send,
Both as a critic and a friend.
I tell it with some variation
(Not altogether a translation)
From La Fontaine,† an author, Dick,
Whose muse would touch thee to the quick.
The subject is of that same kind
To which thy heart seems most inclined.
How verse may alter it, God knows;
Thou lovest it well, I'm sure, in prose.
So without preface or pretence
To hold thee longer in suspense,
I shall proceed, as I am able,
To the recital of my fable.

A goblin of the merry kind,
More black of hue than cursed of mind,
To help a lover in distress,
Contrived a charm with such success,
That in short space the cruel dame
Relented, and returned his flame.
The bargain made betwixt 'em both
Was bound by honour and by oath:
The lover laid down his salvation,
And Satan staked his reputation.
The latter promised on his part
(To serve his friend and show his art)
That madam should by twelve o'clock,
Though hitherto as hard as rock,

* Richard Temple, Viscount Cobham.

† *Contes*, 4me. partie, xiv, *La chose impossible*.

Become as gentle as a glove,
And kiss and coo like any dove.
In short, the woman should be his,
That is, upon condition—viz.;
That he, the lover, after tasting
What one would wish were everlasting,
Should, in return for such enjoyment,
Supply the fiend with fresh employment.
That's all, quoth Pug; my poor request
Is only never to have rest;
You thought, 'tis like, with reason too,
That I should have been served, not you.
But what? Upon my friend impose!
No—though a devil, none of those.
Your business, then, pray understand me,
Is nothing more but to command me.
Of one thing only let me warn ye,
Which somewhat nearly may concern ye:
As soon as e'er one work is done,
Straight name a new one; and so on;
Let each to other quick succeed,
Or else—you know how 'tis agreed—
For if through any hums or haws
There haps an intervening pause,
In which, for want of fresh commands,
Your slave obsequious idle stands,
Nor soul nor body ever more
Shall serve the nymph whom you adore,
But both be laid at Satan's feet,
To be disposed as he thinks meet.

At once the lover all approves,
For who can hesitate that loves?
And thus he argues in his thought:
Why, after all, I venture nought;

What mystery is in commanding?
Does that require much understanding?
Indeed, wer't my part to obey,
He'd go the better of the lay,
But he must do what I think fit——
Pshaw, pshaw, young Beelzebub is bit.

Thus, pleased in mind, he calls a chair,
Adjusts and combs, and courts the fair.
The spell takes place, and all goes right,
And happy he employs the night
In sweet embraces, balmy kisses,
And riots in the bliss of blisses.
Oh, joy, cried he, that hast no equal!
But hold—no raptures—mark the sequel.
For now, when near the morning's dawn
The youth began as 'twere to yawn,
His eyes a silky slumber seized,
Or would have done, if Pug had pleased.
But that officious demon, near,
Now buzzed for business in his ear.
In haste he names a thousand things;
The goblin plies his wicker wings,
And in a trice returns to ask
Another and another task.
Now palaces are built and towers,
The work of ages, in few hours.
Then storms are in an instant raised,
Which the next moment are appeased.
Now showers of gold and gems are rained,
As if each India had been drained,
And he, in one astonished view,
Sees both Golconda and Peru.
These things, and stranger things than these,
Were done with equal speed and ease.

And now to Rome poor Pug he'll send;
And Pug soon reached his journey's end,
And soon returned with such a pack
Of Bulls and pardons at his back,
That now the Squire (who had some hope
In holy water and the Pope)
Was out of heart, and at a stand
What next to wish, and what command:
Invention flags, his brain grows muddy,
And black despair succeeds brown study.
In this distress the woeful youth
Acquaints the nymph with all the truth,
Begging her counsel, for whose sake
Both soul and body were at stake.
And is this all? replies the fair:
Let me alone to cure this care.
When next your demon shall appear,
Pray give him—look, what I hold here.
And bid him labour, soon or late,
To lay these ringlets lank and straight.
Then something, scarcely to be seen
Her finger and her thumb between,
She held, and sweetly smiling cried,
Your goblin's skill shall now be tried.
She said, and gave—what shall I call
That thing so shining, crisp and small,
Which round his finger strove to twine?
A tendril of the Cyprian vine?
Or sprig from Cytherea's grove,
Shade of the labyrinth of love?
With awe he now takes from her hand
That fleece-like flower of fairy land.
Less precious, whilom, was the fleece,
Which drew the Argonauts from Greece;

Or that, which modern ages see
The spur and prize of chivalry,
Whose curls of kindred texture grace
Heroes and kings of Spanish race.

The spark prepared and Pug at hand,
He issues thus his strict command.
This line, thus curve and thus orbicular,
Render direct, and perpendicular,
But so direct that in no sort
It ever may in rings retort.

See me no more till this be done:
Hence, to thy task, avaunt, be gone.

Away the fiend like lightning flies,
And all his wit to work applies.
Anvils and presses he employs,
And dins whole hell with hammering noise.

In vain: he to no terms can bring
One twire of that reluctant thing;
The elastic fibre mocks his pains,
And its first spiral form retains.

New stratagems the sprite contrives,
And down the depths of sea he dives.

This sprunt* its pertness sure will lose,
When laid (said he) to soak in ooze.

Poor foolish fiend! He little knew
Whence Venus and her garden grew.

Old ocean, with paternal waves
The child of his own bed receives;
Which oft as dipped new force exerts,
And in more vigorous curls reverts.

So, when to earth Alcides flung
The huge Ant  us, whence he sprung,
From every fall fresh strength he gained,

* "Anything that is short and will not easily bend" (Johnson).

And with new life the fight maintained.

The baffled goblin grows perplexed,
Nor knows what sleight to practise next.
The more he tries, the more he fails;
Nor charm, nor art, nor force avails,
But all concur his shame to show,
And more exasperate the foe.

And now he pensive turns and sad,
And looks like melancholic mad.
He rolls his eyes now off, now on
That wonderful phenomenon.
Sometimes he twists and twirls it round,
Then, pausing, meditates profound.
No end he sees of his surprise,
Nor what it should be can devise.
For never yet was wool or feather,
That could stand buff against all weather,
And unrelaxed, like this, resist
Both wind and rain, and snow and mist.
What stuff, or whence, or how 'twas made,
What spinster witch could spin such thread,
He nothing knew; but to his cost
Knew all his fame and labour lost.
Subdued, abashed, he gave it o'er.
'Tis said he blushed; 'tis sure he swore.
Not all the wiles that hell could hatch
Could conquer that superb moustache.
Defeated thus, thus discontent,
Back to the man the demon went.
I grant, quoth he, our contract null,
And give you a discharge in full.
But tell me now, in name of wonder
(Since I so candidly knock under),
What is this thing? Where could it grow?

Pray take it. 'Tis in *statu quo*.
Much good may 't do you; for my part,
I wash my hands of 't from my heart.
In truth, Sir Goblin or Sir Fairy,
Replies the lad, you're too soon weary.
What, leave this trifling task undone!
And thinkest thou this the only one?
Alas! were this subdued, thou'd'st find
Millions of more such still behind,
Which might employ, even to Eternity,
Both you and all your whole fraternity.

OF IMPROVING THE PRESENT TIME

SINCEREST critic of my prose or rhyme,
Tell how thy pleasing Stowe employs thy time.
Say, Cobham, what amuses thy retreat,
Or stratagems of war, or schemes of state?
Dost thou recall to mind with joy or grief
Great Marlborough's actions, that immortal chief,
Whose slightest trophy raised in each campaign
More than sufficed to signalise a reign?
Does thy remembrance, rising, warm thy heart
With glory past, where thou thyself hadst part,
Or dost thou grieve indignant, now, to see
The fruitless end of all thy victory?
To see the audacious foe, so late subdued,
Dispute those terms for which so long they sued,
As if Britannia now were sunk so low,
To beg that peace she wonted to bestow.
Be far that guilt, be never known that shame,
That England should retract her rightful claim,

Or, ceasing to be dreaded and adored,
Stain with her pen the lustre of her sword!
Or dost thou give the winds afar to blow
Each vexing thought and heart-devouring woe,
And fix thy mind alone on rural scenes,
To turn the levelled lawns to liquid plains,
To raise the creeping rills from humble beds,
And force the latent springs to lift their heads,
On watery columns capitals to rear,
That mix their flowing curls with upper air?
Or dost thou, weary grown, these works neglect,
No temples, statues, obelisks erect,
But catch the morning breeze from fragrant meads,
Or shun the noontide ray in wholesome shades,
Or slowly walk along the mazy wood,
To meditate on all that's wise and good?
For Nature, bountiful, in thee has joined
A person pleasing with a worthy mind,
Not given the form alone, but means and art
To draw the eye or to allure the heart.
Poor were the praise in fortune to excel,
Yet want the way to use that Fortune well.
While thus adorned, while thus with virtue crowned,
At home in peace, abroad in arms renowned,
Graceful in form and winning in address,
While well you think what aptly you express,
With health, with honour, with a fair estate,
A table free, and elegantly neat,
What can be added more to mortal bliss?
What can he want who stands possessed of this?
What can the fondest wishing mother more
Of Heaven attentive for her son implore?
And yet a happiness remains unknown,
Or to philosophy revealed alone;

A precept, which unpractised renders vain
Thy flowing hopes, and pleasure turns to pain.
Should hope and fear thy heart alternate tear,
Or love, or hate, or rage, or anxious care,
Whatever passions may thy mind infest,
(Where is that mind which passions ne'er molest?)
Amidst the pangs of such intestine strife,
Still think the present day the last of life;
Defer not till to-morrow to be wise,
To-morrow's sun to thee may never rise.
Or should to-morrow chance to cheer thy sight
With her enlivening and unlooked-for light,
How grateful will appear her dawning rays,
As favours unexpected doubly please!
Who thus can think and who such thoughts pursues,
Content may keep his life, or calmly lose;
All proofs of this thou mayest thyself receive,
When leisure from affairs will give thee leave.
Come, see thy friend, retired without regret,
Forgetting care, or striving to forget;
In easy contemplation soothing time
With morals much, and now and then with rhyme;
Not so robust in body as in mind,
And always undejected, though declined;
Not wondering at the world's new wicked ways,
Compared with those of our forefathers' days;
For virtue now is neither more or less,
And vice is only varied in the dress.
Believe it, men have ever been the same,
And Ovid's golden age is but a dream.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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A. THE OLD BACHELOR

The Old Bachelor, the most read of all Congreve's plays, ran into seven editions before 1710. The first four editions—all published by Buck in 1693—are, however, strictly a single edition, since sixteen of the pages were not reset at all.* The third and fourth editions are marked "Corrected," but the corrections which are indubitably Congreve's are not numerous. The unnumbered edition, really the fifth, which is dated 1694 (with variant title pages for the two publishers, Buck and Knapton), is a rather careless reprint of the first edition. The sixth edition (Buck, 1697), a reprint of the fifth, was "Corrected," apparently by Congreve. It embodies the emendations of the third and fourth editions and adds several of its own. The seventh edition (R.W., 1707) is a reprint of the sixth.

The text of *The Old Bachelor* in the *Works* (1710), the text followed in this edition, seems to have been set up from a copy of the sixth edition with MS. corrections by Congreve. The sixth edition, however, carried over a number of the errors of the fifth and six of these errors were inadvertently retained in the final text. They have been corrected here.

- P. 4, l. 17. Boy and footmen—*Qq. omit Boy.*†
 P. 5, l. 8 Business—*Pox o' business, Qq.*
 P. 5, l. 18. wisdom's—*pox wisdom's, Qq.*
 P. 5, l. 24. earthy—*Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4; earthly, Q5, Q6, Q7, 1710.*

* Sigs. A, a, and the outer forme of E. Sigs. B, C, D, and the inner forme of E were reset for *Q2* and retained in *Q3* and *Q4*. Sig. F was reset for *Q2* and retained in *Q4* (but in *Q3* is identical with *Q1*). The inner forme of G was reset for *Q3* and the whole gathering for *Q4*, and the inner forme of H for *Q4*. These statistics were obtained from the copies in the Harvard Library. I have seen copies in which the arrangement of the gatherings is different.

† *Q1* is the first quarto edition, *Q2* the second quarto, etc.; *Qq.* means all the quarto editions. Unless otherwise stated it is to be assumed that the reading of the text is that of the *Works* (1710).

- P. 6, l. 20. had her—enjoyed her, *Qq.*
 P. 6, l. 30. husband—*Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4*; husbands, *Q5, Q6, Q7.*
 P. 7, l. 2. blind of?—*Qq. add* For she only stalks under him to take aim at her husband.
 P. 9, l. 4. services—service, *Qq.*
 P. 9, l. 5. not having seen—not seeing, *Qq.*
 P. 13, l. 6. rainy day?—*Qq. add* when it may be the means of getting into a fair lady's books?
 P. 15, l. 10. Oh, 'tis Sir Joseph . . . another way—Oh, here he comes. Stand close. Let 'em pass. SIR JOSEPH WITTOL and CAPTAIN BLUFFE cross the stage. *Qq.*
 P. 16, l. 2. who had helped—who helped, *Qq.*
 P. 17, l. 3. devoured my members—*Qq.*, devoured, etc. 1710.
 P. 18, l. 19. most—*Q4*; must, *Q1, Q2, Q5, Q6, Q7.*
 P. 19, l. 21. paying—refunding, *Qq.*
 P. 20, l. 20. bless us—God bless us, *Qq.*
 P. 24, l. 23. BETTY waiting—*Qq. omit.*
 P. 24, l. 29. you've said—you said, *Qq.*
 P. 26, l. 19. it's false—*Qq. add* Betty. (*Calls.*
 P. 26, l. 23. impertinent. Betty.—*Qq. omit* Betty.
 P. 26, l. 24. Ha, ha, ha.—*Qq. add* Enter BETTY.
 P. 27, l. 7. BETTY with hoods—*Qq. insert* after you admire.
 P. 30, l. 1. most prevailing—*Q3, Q4, Q6, Q7*; standing, *Q1, Q2, Q5.*
 P. 30, l. 23. in the—*Q1, Q2, Q5, Q6, Q7*; into the, *Q3, Q4.*
 P. 31, l. 6. save a man—*Q1, Q5, Q6*, save man. *Q2, Q3, Q4.*
 P. 32, l. 2. could—*Q1, Q5, Q6, Q7*; would, *Q2, Q3, Q4.*
 P. 32, l. 13. his—his lust, *Qq.*
 P. 32, l. 15. kindles—itches, *Qq.*
 P. 33, l. 10. I a-going—*Q6, Q7*; I going, *Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5.*
 P. 34, l. 13. easily—easy, *Qq.*

- P. 35, l. 18. master; tother—master, but the tother, Q1, Q5;
master, but the other, Q2, Q3, Q4; master, but
tother, Q6, Q7.
- P. 37, l. 2. dare—Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4; dares, Q5, Q6, Q7, 1710.
- P. 37, l. 6. mistress—Q7. *add* as a clap is to the pox.
- P. 37, l. 12. mistress mine—Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4; mistress of
mine, Q5, Q6, Q7, 1710.
- P. 37, l. 19. *Cries*—Q7; 1710 *omits*.
- P. 38, l. 20. Fondlewife—Q7. (*except* Q1); Fumblewife, Q1.
- P. 41, l. 4. unless—without, Q7.
- P. 42, l. 13. Song—Q7. *add 2 more verses*:
The fearful nymph replied, *Forbear,*
I cannot, dare not, must not hear.
Dearest Thyrsis, do not move me,
Do not, do not, if you love me!
Oh, let me, still the shepherd said,
But while she fond resistance made
The hasty joy in struggling fled.
- Vexed at the pleasure she had missed,
She frowned and blushed, then sighed and
kissed,
And seemed to moan in sullen cooing
The sad miscarriage of their wooing.
But vain, alas, were all her charms;
For Thyrsis, deaf to love's alarms,
Baffled and senseless, tired her arms.
- P. 42, l. 31. with suspense—in suspense, Q7.
- P. 44, l. 3. melancholic—melancholy, Q7.
- P. 44, l. 4. for thee . . . of thee—for you . . . of you, Q7.
- P. 44, l. 9. yet a more—Q1, Q5, Q6, Q7; a yet more, Q2,
Q3, Q4.
- P. 44, l. 33. self honest—self—honest, Q7.
- P. 45, l. 17. of her sight—Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4; of sight, Q5, Q6,
Q7, 1710.
- P. 45, l. 21. her kiss is sweeter—Q6, Q7; she kisses sweeter
Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5.

- P. 46, l. 15. both—do, *Qq.*
 P. 47, l. 23. affair, sir—affair so, *Qq.*
 P. 47, l. 28. help pay—*Q1, Q5*; help to pay, *Q2, Q3, Q4.*
 P. 47, l. 30. Go and—Go in and, *Qq.*
 P. 49, l. 1. my head—*Qq. add* You will have it somewhere else.
 P. 49, l. 17. terribly—*Qq. (except Q1)*; terrible, *Q1.*
 P. 52, l. 4. My mistress is coming, sir—I'll call my mistress, *Qq.*
 P. 55, l. 7. I have put—I put, *Qq.*
 P. 55, l. 8. unhewn—*Q4, Q6, Q7*; unknown, *Q1, Q2, Q3, Q5.*
 P. 56, l. 19. kid-leather gloves—kid gloves, *Qq.*
 P. 57, l. 34. some distance—a distance, *Qq.*
 P. 58, l. 19. fellow. I—*Qq. (except Q4)*; fellow so. I, *Q4.*
 P. 59, l. 18. has—have, *Qq.*
 P. 59, l. 20. tother—the tother, *Qq.*
 P. 65, l. 10. the pox—*Qq. (except Q4)*; a pox, *Q4.*
 P. 66, l. 5. Ah,—*Qq. add* I wish he has lain upon nobody's stomach but his own.
 P. 66, l. 5. answer me,—Answer me that, *Qq.*
 P. 68, l. 10. coming—*Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4*; come, *Q5, Q6, Q7, 1710.*
 P. 68, l. 18. Philistines—*Qq. add* have been upon thee.
 P. 69, l. 13. HEARTWELL . . door—*Qq., but 1710 omits.*
 P. 69, l. 22. Oh aye—Oh pox, *Qq.*
 P. 70, l. 7. Even I—*Qq. (except Q1, Q5)*; Even—, *Q1, Q5.*
 P. 70, l. 24. make—stop, *Qq.*
 P. 71, l. 5. you to know—*Q6, Q7*; you know, *Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5.*
 P. 71, l. 32. musty—so musty, *Qq.*
 P. 75, l. 34. a thing as—as *Qq.*
 P. 76, l. 28. ladies' favours—*Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4*; lady's favour, *Q5, Q6, Q7, 1710.*
 P. 77, l. 17. railing—*Qq. (except Q4)*; rallying, *Q4.*
 P. 79, l. 7. succeeding—*Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4*; succeeded, *Q5, Q6, Q7, 1710.*

- P. 79, l. 33. fluttering—flattering, *Qq.*
 P. 80, l. 22. breath—*Qq.* add I'm in haste now, but I'll come
 in at the catastrophe. (*Exit.*
 P. 81, l. 7. night!—*Qq.* add Leave me. (*Exit* Boy.
 P. 81, l. 30. How—Jesu! How, *Qq.*
 P. 82, l. 9. racked—wracked, *Qq.*
 P. 83, l. 2. your mistress . . . my mistress—your whore . . . my
 whore, *Qq.*
 P. 83, l. 26. Come in . . . ladies—(*Exit. Qq.*
 P. 83, l. 29. *Enter* SIR JOSEPH—*Re-enter* SHARPER with SIR
 JOSEPH, *Qq.*
 P. 87, l. 30. end—ends, *Qq.*

B. THE DOUBLE-DEALER

There were two quarto editions of *The Double-Dealer*, both published by Tonson—in 1694 and 1706 respectively. The second edition, a reprint of the first with extensive corrections by Congreve, was reprinted with further corrections in the collected *Works* (1710). There are copies of the second edition which have Knapton's name, as well as Tonson's, on the title page.

- P. 90, l. 18. And will—Let it, *Qq.*
 P. 92, l. 17. with chambers adjoining—*Qq. omit.*
 P. 92, l. 19. The Time . . . evening—*Qq., but 1710 omits.*
 P. 93, l. 6. I'm weary—Pox, I'm weary, *Qq.*
 P. 93, l. 12. have more—have the more, *Qq.*
 P. 93, l. 16. to follow you—of following you, *Qq.*
 P. 94, l. 4. Pshaw, man—Pox, man, *Qq.*
 P. 96, l. 4. of revenge—*Q2*; of her revenge, *Q1.*
 P. 96, l. 8. put it into—*Q2*; put into, *Q1.*
 P. 96, l. 24. they had—she had, *Qq.*
 P. 96, l. 31. service you—*Q2*; service that you, *Q1.*
 P. 97, l. 10. any suspicion—*Q1*; a suspicion, *Q2.*
 P. 97, l. 26. notwithstanding her—for all her, *Qq.*
 P. 99, l. 4. 'tis such—*Q2*; Jesu, 'tis such, *Q1.*

- P. 99, l. 7. with one—*Q2*; with him, *Q1*.
 P. 99, l. 23. you joke—you're going to joke, *Qq*.
 P. 100, l. 9. particular in—*Q2*; particular and novel, *Q1*.
 P. 100, l. 25. would——. Well,—would bepiss yourself. Well,
Qq.
 P. 101, l. 9. world allows—world allow, *Qq*.
 P. 101, l. 18. the deuce—*Q2*; deuce, *Q1*.
 P. 101, l. 31. Here is company coming—*Qq. omit*.
 P. 102, l. 26. a vice—*Q2*; vice, *Q1*.
 P. 102, l. 31. can clear?—*Qq. add* One who is no more moved
 with the reflection of his crimes than of his
 face, but walks unstartled from the mirror and
 straight forgets the hideous form.
 P. 104, l. 16. you yourself—*Q2*; yourself, *Q1*.
 P. 105, l. 1. possess—enjoy, *Qq*.
 P. 106, l. 17. nor you—*Q2*; and you, *Q1*.
 P. 107, l. 18. Cynthia—*Q2*; my dear Cynthia, *Q1*.
 P. 108, l. 13. Oh dear—*Q2*; Oh Lord, *Q1*.
 P. 108, l. 15. Oh heavens—*Q2*; Oh Jesu, *Q1*.
 P. 110, l. 5. what I—*Q2*; all I, *Q1*.
 P. 110, l. 9. thinking, though—*Q2*; thinking that though, *Q1*.
 P. 110, l. 30. laid out in an entertainment—shared between us,
Qq.
 P. 111, l. 12. must forsake—does forsake, *Qq*.
 P. 111, l. 30. inflation—inspiration, *Qq*.
 P. 113, l. 6. Nilus is in—Nilus in, *Qq*.
 P. 113, l. 13. these three years—*Q2*; this three year, *Q1*.
 P. 113, l. 15. invincible—impenetrable, *Qq*.
 P. 113, l. 21. to say—to speak, *Qq*.
 P. 114, l. 7. a child that was—*Q2*; any child that were, *Q1*.
 P. 114, l. 14. loves—loved, *Qq*.
 P. 114, l. 31. daughter to procure—*Q2*; daughter procure, *Q1*.
 P. 115, l. 12. Is it—Sure, is it, *Qq*.
 P. 115, l. 17. or not—*Q2*; or no, *Q1*.
 P. 116, l. 20. melancholic—melancholy, *Qq*.
 P. 117, l. 15. of my being—*Q1*; of being, *Q2*.
 P. 117, l. 23. Oh, see, I see—*Q2*; Oh, I see, I see, *Q1*.

- P. 124, l. 10. forming another—*Q2*; forming of another, *Q1*.
 P. 124, l. 25. and I—*Q2*; I, *Q1*.
 P. 125, l. 21. 'em all—all, *Qq*.
 P. 125, l. 31. I do—*Q2*; I shall do, *Q1*.
 P. 127, l. 14. I can't—*Q2*; Pox, I can't, *Q1*.
 P. 127, l. 32. a wife—his wife, *Qq*.
 P. 129, l. 5. Sir Paul—*Q2*; Jesu, Sir Paul, *Q1*.
 P. 129, l. 9. have you to—*Q2*; have you about you to, *Q1*.
 P. 130, l. 26. her own sex—her sex, *Qq*.
 P. 131, l. 3. carries it to SIR PAUL—*Qq*; 1710 omits.
 P. 131, l. 12. Carries the letter . . . exit—*Qq*; 1710 omits.
 P. 132, l. 8. tell you—*Q2*; tell you why, *Q1*.
 P. 132, l. 29. the next—your next, *Qq*.
 P. 132, l. 32. melancholic—melancholy, *Qq*.
 P. 133, l. 14. conversation?—conversation there? *Qq*.
 P. 135, l. 9. all's well. "More or less."—all's well. *Qq*.
 P. 135, l. 25. Was he?—Was that he then? *Qq*.
 P. 135, l. 26. in the—*Q2*; into the, *Q1*.
 P. 136, l. 13. eringoes—'tis eringoes, *Qq*.
 P. 138, l. 25. both willing—*Q2*; both so willing, *Q1*.
 P. 139, l. 9. you have—why have you, *Qq*.
 P. 139, l. 13. this very moment—this moment, *Qq*.
 P. 141, l. 7. my trembling heart—*Q2*; my aching trembling heart, *Q1*.
 P. 144, l. 15. doing—*Q2*; doings, *Q1*.
 P. 144, l. 23. am in such—*Q2*; am such, *Q1*.
 P. 146, l. 2. living—*Q2*; being, *Q1*.
 P. 146, l. 6. looks—talks, *Qq*.
 P. 146, l. 12. settle accounts—settle the accounts, *Qq*.
 P. 146, l. 24. fiddles—*Q1*; fiddlers, *Q2*.
 P. 148, l. 24. myself—*Q2*; myself neither, *Q1*.
 P. 150, l. 31. be a cuckold—*Q1*; be cuckold, *Q2*.
 P. 151, l. 4. have been even—*Q2*; have even been, *Q1*.
 P. 151, l. 5. of motion?—*Qq*. add and rendered incapable of using the common benefits of Nature?
 P. 152, l. 2. more; I'll—more; there has hardly been consummation between us and I'll, *Qq*.

- P. 152, l. 24. Oh, he comes . . . sight—*Qq. substitute* Well, remember for this your right hand shall be swathed down again to-night. And I thought to have always allowed you that liberty.
- SIR PAUL. Nay, but, madam, I shall offend again if you don't allow me to reach—
- LADY PLYANT. Drink the less, you sot, and do't before you come to bed.
- P. 153, l. 16. *from different doors—severally, Qq.*
- P. 153, l. 19. gone into—*Q2*; gone down from, *Q1*.
- P. 153, l. 24. she has made—she's but gone to make, *Q1*; she's gone to make, *Q2*.
- P. 153, l. 26. she'll retire—and will retire, *Qq.*
- P. 154, l. 22. can't make you an answer—*Q2*; can make you no answer, *Q1*.
- P. 154, l. 23. be silent—be so silent, *Qq.*
- P. 155, l. 32. *the hangings—Q2; the hanging, Q1.*
- P. 156, l. 5. MELLEFONT *absconding—Qq. omit.*
- P. 156, l. 18. has made—*Q2*; had made, *Q1*.
- P. 159, l. 17. her servants.—*Qq. add* though she can wear more shapes in shining day than fear shows cowards in the dark.
- P. 164, l. 12. tell you—told you, *Qq.*
- P. 164, l. 21. villain—damned villain, *Qq.*
- P. 164, l. 22. It is impossible—Hell and fire! It is impossible, *Qq.*
- P. 164, l. 24. bating-place—*Qq. add* to stay his stomach in the road to her.
- P. 164, l. 25. distraction—destruction, *Qq.*
- P. 164, l. 29. traitor—*Qq. add* to a hell of torments. But he's damnation-proof, a devil already, and fire is his element.
- P. 165, l. 6. as all your—*Q1*; as your, *Q2*.
- P. 165, l. 33. own horns—*Qq. add* and pimp for your living.
- P. 166, l. 1. You're a—She's a, *Qq.*
- P. 167, l. 2. Therefore—(*Aside.*) You may be deceived. Therefore, *Qq.*

- P. 167, l. 7. but thou—but that thou, *Qq*.
 P. 167, l. 17. leading—leads, *Qq*.
 P. 168, l. 15. you a pleasure—you pleasure, *Qq*.
 P. 169, l. 19. shall—should *Qq*.
 P. 170, l. 11. villain I—*Q2*; villain that I, *Q1*.
 P. 171, l. 6. traitor—hellish traitor, *Qq*.
 P. 171, l. 21. this is—by heaven, this is, *Qq*.
 P. 172, l. 31. rich—wide, *Qq*.
 P. 173, l. 16. heart—death, *Qq*.
 P. 173, l. 21. it wants—there want, *Q1*; there wants, *Q2*.
 P. 173, l. 28. CYNTHIA and LORD TOUCHWOOD come forward.—
Qq.; 1710 omits.
 P. 175, l. 27. Madam—*Q2*; O Jesu, madam, *Q1*.
 P. 176, l. 23. me go—*Qq*. add and plagues and curses seize you
 all.
 P. 177, l. 7. *Servants seize him.*—*Qq*. omit.
 P. 177, l. 9. *They carry out MASKWELL, who hangs down his
 head.*—*Qq*.; 1710 omits.

C. LOVE FOR LOVE

Love for Love went into four editions before 1710: the first* (Tonson, 1695) reprinted for the second (1695), the second for the third (1697), the third for the fourth (1704), and the fourth for the collected *Works* (1710). Of the variant readings it seems necessary to attribute only those in the third edition and the *Works* to Congreve. The present text has been obtained by printing from the *Works*, except in those passages where that text agrees with the second edition as against the first or with the fourth as against the third.

- P. 182, l. 8. upon ungrateful—upon the ungrateful, *Q1*, *Q2*,
Q3; upon th' ungrateful, *Q4*.
 P. 182, l. 12. Well plant—And plant, *Qq*.

* A later edition, embodying the last form of the text but misdated 1695, is occasionally mistaken for the first edition. Mr. Summers used a copy of the first edition for his "Nonesuch" edition which diverges widely from such copies as I have seen. It may, perhaps, be a "first impression."

- P. 186, l. 4. confinement—*Q1, Q2*; confinements, *Q3, Q4*.
 P. 186, l. 28. the love—*Q3, Q4*; that love, *Q1, Q2*.
 P. 189, l. 19. shan't—won't, *Q7*.
 P. 189, l. 34. and of my—*Q1*; and my *Q2, Q3, Q4, 1710*.
 P. 190, l. 1. uses—used, *Q7*.
 P. 191, l. 1. intended—intend, *Q7*.
 P. 191, l. 19. Margery with—Margery and, *Q7*.
 P. 194, l. 16. drunk—drank, *Q7*.
 P. 196, l. 7. hand in—hand upon, *Q7*.
 P. 196, l. 19. inhumane—*Q1, Q2, Q3*; inhuman, *Q4, 1710*.
 P. 198, l. 31. hips—lips, *Q7*.
 P. 199, l. 29. inhumane—*Q1, Q2, Q3*; inhuman, *Q4, 1710*.
 P. 200, l. 5. Is there—Have you, *Q7*.
 P. 200, l. 27. inhumane—*Q1, Q2, Q3*; inhuman, *Q4, 1710*.
 P. 201, l. 6. I shall—Hey dey! I shall, *Q7*.
 P. 201, l. 17. he has— he have, *Q7*.
 P. 201, l. 33. bodes me no— *Q3, Q4*; bodes no, *Q1, Q2*.
 P. 204, l. 1. burning brandy—burning of brandy, *Q7*.
 P. 204, l. 20. be but—be only, *Q7*.
 P. 206, l. 29. too? Uncle—*Q1*; too, Uncle! *Q2, Q3, Q4 1710*.
 P. 207, l. 23. jealous of her when—jealous when, *Q7*.
 P. 209, l. 10. another Christian.—*Q7. add* or any teats but two
 that han't given suck this thirty years.
 P. 210, l. 17. He's here already.—*Q7. omit*.
 P. 213, l. 2. brought—sent, *Q7*.
 P. 214, l. 24. a has—*Q1*; he has, *Q2, Q3, Q4, 1710*.
 P. 215, l. 17. with the lawful authority of a parent, press—beat
 up for you with the lawful authority of a
 parent and press, *Q7*.
 P. 217, l. 9. his own entrails—his entrails, *Q7*.
 P. 219, l. 2. confidence—impudence, *Q7*.
 P. 219, l. 27. what is—that is, *Q7*.
 P. 220, l. 17. liking you—liking of you, *Q7*.
 P. 220, l. 24. are you not—*Q3, Q4*; are not you, *Q1, Q2*.
 P. 224, l. 13. have taken it—take it, *Q7*.
 P. 225, l. 7. has locked— has not locked, *Q7*.

- P. 225, l. 16. *at the door*—Qq.; 1710 *omits*.
 P. 226, l. 2. or not—or no, Qq.
 P. 229, l. 19. this proves—pox, this proves, Qq.
 P. 229, l. 22. at Pall Mall—of Pall Mall, Qq.
 P. 230, l. 24. there was—Q3, Q4; there were, Q1, Q2.
 P. 230, l. 32. *Re-enter SCANDAL with one to sing*.—Qq.; 1710 *omits*.
 P. 231, l. 25. press me—Q3, Q4; press one, Q1, Q2.
 P. 233, l. 11. if you—an you, Qq.
 P. 233, l. 24. Mess, that's—Mess, and that's, Qq.
 P. 236, l. 6. is that—is this, that, Qq.
 P. 237, l. 22. selling contrary—selling of contrary, Qq.
 P. 238, l. 27. melancholic . . . melancholic—melancholy . . . melancholy, Qq.
 P. 238, l. 28. on a Sunday—of a Sunday, Qq.
 P. 239, l. 17. Unless—Without, Qq.
 P. 239, l. 28. yet he says—yet says, Qq.
 P. 243, l. 27. *Calls*.—Q1; *omitted in* Q2, Q3, Q4, 1710.
 P. 245, l. 11. with tother—Q3, Q4; with the tother, Q1, Q2.
 P. 245, l. 25. but I—yet I, Qq.
 P. 250, l. 19. was poor for—Q3, Q4; was for, Q1, Q2.
 P. 251, l. 33. sorry as—Q3, Q4; sorry for him as Q1, Q2.
 P. 255, l. 16. sit thee—sit you, Qq.
 P. 256, l. 1. Vally—Val, Qq.
 P. 257, l. 22. A pox—Q3, Q4; Ah, pox, Q1, Q2.
 P. 258, l. 8. unconvertable—unconverted, Qq.
 P. 259, l. 7. what face—*Ewald's emendation*; that face, Qq. and 1710.
 P. 259, l. 13. that she had done favours—favours, Qq.
 P. 261, l. 34. a good—good, Qq.
 P. 262, l. 1. did you—d'ye, Qq.
 P. 265, l. 16. d'ye do, sir—*my emendation*; d'ye you, sir, Q1, Q2, Q3, 1710; d'ye, sir, Q4.
 P. 266, l. 5. intend—Q3, Q4; intended, Q1, Q2.
 P. 269, l. 4. wilt—in short—wilt, have what thou wilt—in short, Qq.

- P. 270, ls. 10-12. bad... bad—*my emendation*; sad... sad, Q₁, Q₂;
bad... sad, Q₃, Q₄, 1710.
- P. 270, l. 21. for mercenary—*Leigh Hunt's emendation* (1840);
for by mercenary, Q_q. and 1710.
- P. 271, l. 16. in the—in a, Q_q.
- P. 273, l. 28. yet and can—Q₃, Q₄; yet, I can, Q₁, Q₂.
- P. 274, l. 10. Outsides—Oh pox, outsides, Q_q.
- P. 274, l. 14. ancestors—family, Q_q.
- P. 275, l. 13. forfeits . . . understanding—commits the reputa-
tion of her honesty or understanding to the
censure of the world, Q_q.
- P. 275, l. 15. is a slave—submits both, Q_q.
- P. 276, l. 13. in jest—Q₃, Q₄; in a jest, Q₁, Q₂.
- P. 277, l. 27. Samson, the strongest of the name—the strongest
Samson of your name, Q_q.
- P. 277, l. 30. pulling too—pulling down too, Q_q.
- P. 278, l. 25. Aye—Q₁, Q₂; Hye, Q₃, Q₄.
- P. 281, l. 34. him to be—Q₃, Q₄; him be, Q₁, Q₂.
- P. 282, l. 27. bid you.—Q_q. add *Exeunt* NURSE and MISS.
- P. 283, l. 2. Nurse, why are you not gone?—Q_q. omit.
- P. 285, l. 21. your new—Q₃, Q₄; your own, Q₁, Q₂.
- P. 287, l. 3. To MRS. FRAIL.—*Aside to* FRAIL, Q₁; omitted in
Q₂, Q₃, Q₄.
- P. 288, l. 18. me leave—Q₃, Q₄; my leave, Q₁, Q₂.
- P. 289, l. 16. Generous Valentine!—(*Aside.*) Q₁, Q₂, Q₃;
direction omitted in Q₄.
- P. 290, l. 13. illiterate old fool and I'm another.—illiterate fool
and I'm another and the stars are liars. And if
I had breath enough I'd curse them and you,
myself and everybody. Oons! Cullied, bubbled,
jilted, woman-bobbed at last! I have not
patience, Q_q.
- P. 291, l. 1. to that immoderate—at that immoderate, Q_q.
- P. 291, l. 23. even to—even unto, Q_q.

D. THE WAY OF THE WORLD

There were only two quarto editions of *The Way of the World*. The first was published by Tonson in 1700, and the second, with corrections by Congreve, in 1706. The text of the *Works* (1710) is based upon that of the second edition.

- P. 301, l. 18. this amour—*Q2*; that amour, *Q1*.
 P. 302, l. 3. than is your wife—than your wife, *Qq*.
 P. 303, l. 19. who is—that is, *Qq*.
 P. 305, l. 28. tother—the tother, *Qq*.
 P. 306, l. 14. a Messenger—the Messenger, *Qq*.
 P. 308, l. 4. pity—pity faith, *Qq*.
 P. 309, l. 16. a coach—the coach, *Qq*.
 P. 311, l. 9. who loves—that loves, *Qq*.
 P. 311, l. 13. he had said—he said, *Qq*.
 P. 314, l. 3. You do—Do you, *Qq*.
 P. 319, l. 14. I do now—*Q1*; I do not now, *Q2*, 1710 (*apparently by an oversight*).
 P. 319, l. 33. loving another—loving of another, *Qq*.
 P. 324, l. 12. condition that she—condition she, *Qq*.
 P. 325, l. 3. and streamers—and her streamers, *Qq*.
 P. 325, l. 14. just disgraced—in disgrace, *Qq*.
 P. 326, l. 3. a pecket—*Q1*; a packet, *Q2*, 1710 (*misunderstanding Mincing's idiom*).
 P. 326, l. 12. with prose—*Q2*; *Q1* adds I fancy one's hair would not curl if it were pinned up with prose.
 P. 326, l. 16. cremp—*Q1*; cramp, *Q2*, 1710 (*again misunderstanding Mincing*).
 P. 329, l. 12. a moment—one moment, *Qq*.
 P. 329, l. 26. Without the—Unless by the, *Qq*.
 P. 334, l. 4. Go, you thing, and send her in. (*To PEG.*)—*Qq*.
 insert at I hear her.
 P. 334, l. 13. transported! Well, if—*Q2*; transported! Well, here it is. All that is left. All that is not kissed away. Well, if, *Q1*.

- P. 337, l. 9. swimmingness—*Q2*; swimminess. *Q1*.
P. 337, l. 19. decorums. Oh—*Q2*; decorums. Nothing but importunity can surmount decorums. Oh, *Q1*.
P. 338, l. 24. *Calls*.—*Enter* FOOTMAN, *Qq*.
P. 339, l. 16. generosity—generosity, and stalk for him till he takes his stand to aim at a fortune, *Qq*.
P. 341, l. 1. I swear—*Q2*; I'll swear, *Q1*.
P. 341, l. 4. that liberty—the liberty, *Qq*.
P. 341, l. 31. here—*Qq. omit*.
P. 344, l. 31. any further—ever the further, *Qq*.
P. 344, l. 32. read, than—read, any more than, *Qq*.
P. 345, l. 23. hither—here, *Qq*.
P. 346, l. 7. there come—*my emendation*; here come, *Qq*, 1710.
P. 348, l. 24. was but for—that was for, *Qq*.
P. 350, l. 32. a cuckold by anticipation—an anticipated cuckold, *Qq*.
P. 351, l. 4. and be outstripped—*Q2*; and outstripped, *Q1*.
P. 351, l. 20. may be—*Qq. add* She might throw up her cards but I'll be hanged if she did not put Pam in her pocket.
P. 353, l. 12. now. You'll—Now you'll, *Qq*.
P. 358, l. 6. When you're disposed, when you're disposed—When you're disposed, *Qq*.
P. 359, l. 33. never be seen—never to be seen, *Qq*.
P. 360, l. 1. another ever—*Q2*; another for ever, *Q1*.
P. 361, l. 12. gentlewoman—*Q1*; gentlewomen, *Q2*.
P. 361, l. 23. me father—me the father, *Qq*.
P. 363, l. 25. unsized—unfixed, *Qq*.
P. 363, l. 27. stopped the—stopped their, *Qq*.
P. 367, l. 24. with broomsticks—*Qq. omit*.
P. 370, l. 32. see the—see by the, *Qq*.
P. 371, l. 7. make a—make you a, *Qq*.
P. 373, l. 24. the merchandise—your merchandise, *Qq*.
P. 376, l. 10. of Poems—of Verses and Poems, *Qq*.
P. 376, l. 23. or Mirabell—and Mirabell, *Qq*.
P. 377, l. 5. you I owe the—you the, *Qq*.

- P. 279, l. 13. dear friend—my dear friend, *Qq*.
 P. 380, l. 2. it over—it all over, *Qq*.
 P. 380, l. 10. flounder-man's—*Qq*. *add* or the woman that
 cries grey peas.
 P. 383, l. 30. *Goes to the door and hems.—Exit, Qq*.
 P. 384, l. 33. may—might, *Qq*.
 P. 385, l. 14. *Aside.—apart, Qq*.
 P. 386, l. 5. your guard—*Q2*; a guard, *Qr*.
 P. 387, l. 11. are brought—are bought and brought, *Qq*.

E. INCOGNITA

There were four editions of *Incognita* in Congreve's lifetime: (1) a duodecimo (Buck, 1692); (2) an octavo (Wellington, 1700) (3) an octavo (Wellington, 1713); (4) a duodecimo (Wellington, 1713). The text in this edition has been reprinted from the first edition, which is alone of any authority. I have omitted the dedication and the preface and have corrected the misprints.

F. THE POEMS

The poems in this selection are arranged, as far as it is known, in their chronological order. The earlier poems were originally printed separately in various anthologies and were reprinted, sometimes with corrections, in the collected *Works* (1710). The text followed here has been that of 1710. A few of the shorter pieces were printed in the *Works* for the first time. There are finally two longer poems, *An Impossible Thing* and the letter to Lord Cobham, which were not published until 1720 and 1729 respectively.

On Mrs. Arabella Hunt singing. First printed in the *Miscellanies* of Charles Gildon (1692) and Dryden (1693).

- P. 463, title. Irregular Ode—Pindaric Ode, 1692, 1693.
 P. 463, l. 13. rest, unnecessary springs—rest, y'unnecessary
 springs, 1692, 1693.

- P. 463, l. 20. to soften cares—*1692, 1693 add* 'Tis piercing as
your thoughts and melting as your tears.
- P. 463, l. 21. can impart—does impart, *1692, 1693.*
- P. 464, l. 13. all his downy—*1692*; all its downy, *1693.*
- P. 465, l. 18. did angels taste so exquisite a—were angels blest
with such a luscious, *1692, 1693.*
Stanzas in imitation of Horace. Also printed in
Gildon's and Dryden's *Miscellanies.*
- P. 466, l. 13. thy own—thine own, *1692, 1693.*
- P. 466, l. 19. can nought—does nought, *1692, 1693.*
- P. 467, l. 25. Or but a spring of rosemary shalt have—Unless a
sprig of rosemary thou have, *1692, 1693.*
- P. 468, l. 6. captive gold—captived gold, *1692, 1693.*
- P. 468, l. 10. Again shall—Again 't shall, *1692, 1693.*
- P. 468, l. 13. high food—choice food, *1692, 1693.*
In imitation of Horace. Also printed in Gildon's and
Dryden's *Miscellanies.*
- P. 469, l. 3. autumn of the sky—*1692; 1693 add* Whose fall
of leaf would their's supply.
- P. 470, l. 11. The flowers that flourish in the spring—Sweets
that wanton i'th' bosom of the spring, *1692,*
1693.
The Decay. Printed in Gildon's *Miscellany* (*1692*)
and signed W.C. The poem was omitted in *1710* and
is reprinted here for the first time.
Song. First printed in *The Maid's Last Prayer*
(*1693*), a comedy by Thomas Southerne.
- P. 471, l. 3. I always knew, at least—By Heaven, I all along,
1693.
- P. 472, l. 2. And what—Why what, *1693.*
- P. 472, l. 4. I take—I'll take, *1693.*
Song. First printed in *Orpheus Britannicus*, II (*1702*),
with Purcell's setting, reprinted in Dryden's fifth
Miscellany (*1704*).
Verses to the memory of Grace, Lady Gethin. First
printed in the third edition of *Reliquiæ Gethinianæ*
(*1703*), reprinted in Dryden's fifth *Miscellany.*

Song. First printed in Dryden's fifth *Miscellany* (1704).

P. 474, l. 2. And very—For I very, 1704.

P. 474, l. 3. my great passion—my passion, 1704.

P. 474, l. 4. then I said least—I then said the least, 1704.

Song. First printed in Dryden's fifth *Miscellany*.

Epitaph. First printed in Dryden's fifth *Miscellany*.

Amoret. Printed in Dryden's fifth *Miscellany* as "A Hue and Cry after fair Amoret."

Song. First printed in the *Works* (1710).

Doris. First printed in the *Works*.

An Impossible Thing. This poem, with "The Peasant in Search of his Heifer," was first printed separately in 1720 and was then included in the third edition of the *Works* (1719-20).

Of Improving the Present Time. First printed by Lewis in 1729 as "A Letter from Mr. Congreve to the Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Cobham." A better text was printed by Curll in the same year in *Mr. Congreve's Last Will and Testament*.

P. 486, l. 28. elegantly neat—Curll; eloquently neat, Lewis.

P. 487, l. 30. Ovid's golden age—Curll; all the golden age, Lewis.

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